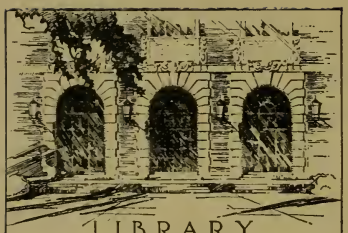

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WHITE LIES.

A Story.

BY

CHARLES READE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

"White Lies" is a reprint. In its first stage simple souls wrote to the publisher, 'This is a French translation; just look at the idioms!'

It is something to be a biped: the quadruped of this species could not take a well for a puddle.

As if the smallest master could not Anglicize French or any other language: vide 'Clouds and Sunshine,' which is French Anglicized.

But a voice from the Public is not to be neglected: nor can I afford to let an error of this sort defeat my great labour, and rob a reader of any pleasure or profit it might otherwise give him.

A French theme has been selected, French sources drawn upon, and French idioms sprinkled, on one principle of art.

True art is a severe battle, not only against egotism, but against monotony. Books should not

emulate peas. Each work should add to the features of literature, not merely to its lamentable bulk.

Therefore I, who have been called a hard, dry copyist of actual life, present you here heroic though human characters, with the faults and virtues of sex. Therefore I, who have painted English, Scotch, and Irish, try my hand at French; and, my story being on French ground, I give it what French colour my narrow pallet holds. *Inter alia*, I sprinkle a few French idioms. Why not? I coloured Christie Johnstone Scotch on this principle, and will colour my next tale German. It is mere mimicry; but not *misplaced*.

Shallow sham scholarship is at war with idiom: but idioms are the cream of human language.

I have seen with pain that my countrymen receive as truth the misrepresentations of French morals that issue from a clever but ignorant clique of Parisian novelists. What does the mill-horse of the Boulevard know about France? He has never seen her with the bodily eye, far less the mental. A mill-round of anything contracts the vision. But a mill-round of vice!

I beg the English reader to believe, what the English traveller knows, that husbands and wives

differ little from English ones, in Brittany, Normandy, Auvergne, Picardy, Provence, and other nations unexplored by Parisian mill-horses, and called France: and generally, though this story is necessarily full of errors of detail, yet in essentials it is a fair national portrait: at least it is not a too flattering tribute to that high-minded and refined nation, where I have met so many gallant men, and so many virtuous women.

C. R.

London, November 28, 1857.

WHITE LIES.

CHAPTER I.

Towards the close of the last century the Baron de Beaurepaire lived in the chateau of that name in Brittany. His family was of prodigious antiquity. Seven successive barons had already flourished on this spot of France when a younger son of the house accompanied his neighbour the Duke of Normandy in his descent on England, and was rewarded by a grant of land, on which he dug a moat and built a chateau, and called it Beaurepaire: the worthy natives turned this into Borreper without an instant's delay. Since that day more than twenty gentlemen of the same lineage had held in turn the original chateau and lands, and handed them down to their present lord.

Thus rooted in his native Brittany, Henri Lionel Marie St. Quentin de Beaurepaire was as fortunate as any man can be pronounced before he dies. He had health, rank, a good income, a fair domain, a goodly house, a loving wife, and two lovely young daughters all veneration and affection. Two months every year he visited the

Faubourg St. Germain and the Court. At both every gentleman and every lacquey knew his name and his face: his return to Brittany after this short absence was celebrated by a rustic fête.

Above all, Monsieur de Beaurepaire possessed that treasure of treasures, content. He hunted no heart-burns. Ambition did not tempt him. Why should he listen to long speeches, and court the unworthy, and descend to intrigue, for so precarious and equivocal a prize as a place in the Government, when he could be De Beaurepaire without trouble or loss of self-respect? Social ambition could get little hold of him. Let parvenus give balls half in doors half out, and light two thousand lamps, and waste their substance battling and manœuvring for fashionable distinction; he had nothing to gain by such foolery, nothing to lose by modest living; he was the twenty-ninth Baron of Beaurepaire. So wise, so proud, so little vain, so strong in health and wealth and honour, one would have said nothing less than an earthquake could shake this gentleman and his house. Yet both were shaken, though rooted by centuries to the soil. But by no vulgar earthquake.

For years France had bowed in silence beneath two galling burdens, a selfish and corrupt monarchy, and a multitudinous, privileged, lazy, and oppressive aristocracy, by whom the peasant, who is now the principal proprietor of the French soil, was handled like a Russian serf.

Now when a high-spirited nation has been long silent under oppression—tremble oppressors! The shallow misunderstand nations as they do men. They fear where no fear is, and play cribbage over a volcano. Such are they who expect a revolt in England whenever England grumbles half a note higher than usual. They do not see that she is venting her ill humour instead of bottling it, and getting her grievance redressed gradually and safely. Such is the old lady who pinches us when the engine lets off its steam with a mighty pother. Then it is she fears an explosion. Such are they who read the frothy bombast of Italian Republicans, and fancy that nation of song, superstition, and slavery is going to be free—is worthy to be free—has the heart or the brains or the soul to be free.

Such were the British placemen, and the pig-headed King, who read the calm, business-like, respectful, yet dignified and determined address of the American colonists, and argued thus—'What! they don't bluster; these then are men we can bully.'*

Such were the French placemen, who did not see how tremendous the danger to that corrupt government and lawless aristocracy, when an

* Compare the manifestoes of Italian Republicans with the proclamations and addresses of the American colonists—*i. e.*, compare the words of the men of words with the words of the men of deeds—the men who fail with the men who succeed; it is a lesson in human nature. They differ as a bladder from a bludgeon, or harlequin's sword from Noll Cromwell's.

ardent people raised their heads, after centuries of brooding, to avenge centuries of wrong.

We all know this wonderful passage of history. How the feeble king was neither woman nor man —could neither concede with grace, nor resist with cannon. How his head fell at a moment when it was monstrous to pretend the liberties of the nation ran any risk from the poor old cipher. How the dregs of the nation came uppermost and passed for 'the people.' How law, religion, common sense, and humanity, hid their faces, the scaffold streamed with innocent blood, and terror reigned.

France was preyed on by unclean beasts, half ass, half tiger. They made her a bankrupt, and they were busy cutting her throat, as well as rifling her pockets, when Heaven sent her a Man. He drove the unclean beasts off her suffering body, and took her in his hand, and set her on high among the nations.

But ere the Hero came—among whose many glories let this be written, that he was a fighting man, yet ended civil slaughter—what wonder many an honest man and good Frenchman despaired of France! Among these was M. de Beaurepaire. These Republicans—murderers of kings, murderers of women, and persecutors of children—were, in his eyes, the most horrible monsters Humanity ever groaned under.

He put on black for the King, and received no visits. He brooded in the chateau, and wrote and

received letters; and these letters came and went by private hands. He felled timber. He raised large sums of money upon his estate. He then watched his opportunity, and on pretence of a journey disappeared from the chateau.

Three months after, a cavalier, dusty and pale, rode into the court-yard of Beaurepaire, and asked to see the baroness; he hung his head and held out a letter. It contained a few sad words from M. de Larochejaquelin. The baron had just fallen in La Vendee, fighting, like his ancestors, on the side of the Crown.

From that hour till her death the baroness wore black.

The mourner would have been arrested, and perhaps beheaded, but for a friend, the last in the world on whom the family reckoned for any solid aid. Doctor St. Aubin had lived in the chateau twenty years. He was a man of science, and did not care a button for money; so he had retired from the practice of medicine, and pursued his researches at ease under the baron's roof. They all loved him, and laughed at his occasional reveries, in the days of prosperity; and now, in one great crisis, the *protégé* became the protector, to their astonishment and his own. But it was an age of ups and downs. This amiable theorist was one of the oldest verbal Republicans in Europe. This is the less to be wondered at that in theory a Republic is the perfect form of government. It is merely in practice that it is impossible; it is only

upon going off paper into reality, and trying actually to self-govern old nations with limited territory and time to heat themselves white hot with the fire of politics and the bellows of bombast —that the thing resolves itself into moonshine and bloodshed—each in indefinite proportions.

Doctor St. Aubin had for years talked and written speculative Republicanism. So, not knowing the man, they thought him a Republican. They applied to him to know whether the baroness shared her husband's opinions, and he boldly assured them she did not; he added, 'She is a pupil of mine.' On this audacious statement they contented themselves with laying a heavy fine on the lands of Beaurepaire.

Assignats were abundant at this time, but good mercantile paper—a notorious coward—had made itself wings and fled, and specie was creeping into strong boxes like a startled rabbit into its hole. The fine was paid, but Beaurepaire had to be heavily mortgaged, and the loan bore a high rate of interest.

This was no sooner arranged than it transpired that the baron just before his death had contracted large debts, for which his estate was answerable.

The baroness sold her carriage and horses, and she and her daughters prepared to deny themselves all but the bare necessaries of life, and pay off their debts if possible. On this their dependents fell away from them; their fair-weather friends came no longer near them; and many a flush of indig-

nation crossed their brows, and many an aching pang their hearts, as adversity revealed the baseness and inconstancy of common people high or low. When the other servants had retired with their wages, one Jacintha remained behind, and begged permission to speak to the baroness.

'What would you with me, my child?' asked that high-bred lady, with an accent in which a shade of surprise mingled with great politeness.

'Forgive me, madame the baroness,' began Jacintha, with a formal curtesy; 'but how can I leave you, and Mademoiselle Josephine, and Mademoiselle Laure? Reflect, madame; I was born at Beaurepaire; my mother died in the chateau; my father died in the village; but he had meat every day from the baron's own table, and fuel from the baron's wood, and died blessing the house of Beaurepaire—Mademoiselle Laure, speak for me! Ah, you weep! it is then that you see it is impossible I can go. Ah no! madame, I will not go; forgive me; I cannot go. The others are gone because prosperity is here no longer. Let it be so; I will stay till the sun shines again upon the chateau, and then you shall send me away if you are bent on it; but not now my ladies—oh, not now! Oh! oh! oh!'

The warm-hearted girl burst out sobbing ungracefully.

'My child,' said the baroness, 'these sentiments touch me, and honour you. But retire, if you please, while I consult my daughters.'

Jacintha cut her sobs dead short, and retreated with a most cold and formal reverence.

The consultation consisted of the baroness opening her arms, and both her daughters embracing her at once.

'My children! there are then some who love you.'

'No! you, mamma! It is you we all love.'

Three women were now the only pillars, a man of science and a servant of all work the only outside props, the buttresses, of the great old house of Beaurepaire.

As months rolled on, Laure de Beaurepaire recovered her natural gaiety in spite of bereavement and poverty—so strong are youth, and health, and temperament. But her elder sister had a grief all her own. Captain Dujardin, a gallant young officer, well born, and his own master, had courted her with her parents' consent; and even when the baron began to look coldly on the soldier of the Republic, young Dujardin, though too proud to encounter the baron's irony and looks of scorn, would not yield love to pique. He came no more to the chateau; but he would wait hours and hours on the path to the little oratory in the park on the bare chance of a passing word or even a kind look from Josephine. So much devotion gradually won a heart which in happier times she had been half encouraged to give him; and when he left her on a military service of uncommon danger, the woman's reserve melted, and, in answer to his

prayers and tears, she owned for the first time that she loved him better than any thing in the world —except duty and honour.

She hid her despondency to comfort him.

'Be prudent for my sake, if not for your own. May God watch over you! Your danger is our only fear; for we are a united family. My father will never force my inclinations; these unhappy dissensions will soon cease, and he will love you again. I do not say—"Be constant." I will not wrong either myself or you by a doubt; but promise me to come back in life, oh! Camille—Camille!'

Then it was his turn to comfort and console her. He promised to come back alive, and with fresh honours, and so more worthy the Demoiselle de Beaurepaire. They pledged their faith to one another.

Letters from the camp breathing a devotion little short of worship fed Josephine's attachment; and more than one public mention of his name and services made her proud as well as fond of the fiery young soldier.

The time was not yet come that she could open her whole heart to her parents. The baron was now too occupied with the State to trouble his head about love fancies. The baroness, like many parents, looked on her daughter as a girl though she was twenty years old. She was of the old school. A passionate love in a lady's heart before marriage was with her contrary to etiquette, and

therefore improper; and to her the great word improper included the little word impossible in one of its many folds. Josephine loved her sister very tenderly; but Laure was three years her junior, and she shrank with modest delicacy from making her a confidante of feelings the bare relation of which leaves the female hearer a child no longer.

Thus Josephine hid her heart, and delicious first love nestled deep in her nature, and thrilled in every secret vein and fibre. Alas! the time came that this loving but proud spirit thanked Heaven she had never proclaimed the depth of her attachment for Camille Dujardin.

They had parted two years, and he had joined the army of the Pyrenees about one month, when suddenly all correspondence ceased on his part.

Restless anxiety rose into terror as this silence continued; and starting and trembling at every sound, and edging to the window at every footstep, Josephine expected hourly the tidings of her lover's death.

Months rolled on in silence.

Then a new torture came. Since he was not dead he must be unfaithful. At this all the pride of her race was fired in her.

The struggle between love and ire was almost too much for nature: violently gay and moody by turns she alarmed both her mother and the good Doctor St. Aubin. The latter was not, I think, quite without suspicion of the truth; however, he

simply prescribed change of air and place. She must go to Frejus, a watering place distant about five leagues. Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire yielded a languid assent. To her all places were alike.

That same night, after all had retired to rest, came a low gentle tap at her door; the next moment Laure came into the room, and, without saying a word, put down her candle and glided up to Josephine, looked her in the face, and wreathed her arms round her neck.

Josephine panted a little; she saw something was coming; the gestures and looks of sisters are volumes to them. Laure clung to her neck.

'What is the matter, my child?'

'I am not a child! there is your mistake. Sister, why is it you love me no longer?'

'I love you no longer?'

'No! We do not hide our heart from her we love; we do not try to hide it from her who loves us. We know the attempt would be in vain.'

Josephine panted heavily; but she answered doggedly—

'Our house is burdened with real griefs! is it for me to intrude vain and unworthy sentiments upon our sacred and honourable sorrows? Oh! my sister, if you have really detected my folly, do not expose me! but, rather help me to conceal and to conquer that for which your elder now blushes before you!' And the proud beauty bowed her white forehead on the mantelpiece, and turned gently away from comfort.

'Josephine,' said Laure, 'I am young, but already I feel that all troubles are light compared with those of the heart. Besides, *we* share our misfortunes and our bereavement, and cheer one another. It is only you who are a miser, and grudge me my right—a share of all your joys, and all your griefs; but do you know that you are the only one in this chateau who does not love me?'

'Ah, Laure, what words are these? my love is older than yours.'

'No! no!'

'Yes, my little fawn, your Josephine loved you the hour you were born, and has loved you ever since without a moment's coldness.'

'Ah! my sister!—my sister! As if I did not know it. Then you will turn your face to me?'

'See!'

'And embrace me?'

'There!'

'And, now, bosom to bosom, and heart to heart; tell me all!'

'I will—to-morrow.'

'At least give me your tears; you see *I* am not niggardly in that respect.'

'Tears, love—ah! would I could!'

'By and by then—meantime do not palpitate so. See, I unclasp my arms. You will find me a reasonable person—indulgent even; compose yourself; or, rather watch my proceedings; you are interested in them.'

'It appears to me that you propose to sleep here.'

'Does that vex you?'

'On the contrary.'

'There I am!' cried Laure, alighting among the sheets like a snow flake on water. 'I await you, mademoiselle.'

Josephine found this lovely face wet, yet smiling saucily, upon her pillow. She drew the fair owner softly to her tender bosom and aching heart, and watched the bright eyes close, and the coral lips part and show their pearls in childlike sleep.

In the morning Laure, half awake, felt something sweep her cheek. She kept her eyes closed, and Josephine, believing her still asleep, fell to kissing her, but only as the south wind kisses the violets, and embraced her tenderly but furtively like a feather curling round a lovely head, caressing yet scarce touching, and murmuring 'little angel!' sighed gratitude and affection over her; but took great care not to wake her with all this. The little angel, who was also a little fox, lay still and feigned sleep, for she felt she was creeping into her sister's heart of hearts. From that day they were confidantes and friends, as well as sisters, and never had a thought or feeling unshared.

Josephine soon found she had very few facts to reveal.

Laure had watched her closely and keenly for months. It was her feelings, her confidence the little love wanted; not her secret—that lay bare

already to the shrewd young minx—I beg her pardon—lynx.

> Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak,
> Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break.

A deep observer proclaimed this three hundred years ago, and every journal that is printed now a days furnishes the examples.

From this silent, moody, gnawing, maddening sorrow, Laure saved her elder sister. She coaxed her to vent each feeling as it rose; her grief, her doubt, her mortification, her indignation, her pride, and the terrible love that at times overpowered all. Thus much was gained; these powerful antagonists were no longer cooped up in her bosom battling together and tearing her. They returned from Frejus: Josephine with a delicate rose tint instead of the pallor that had alarmed St. Aubin. Her mood fluctuated no more. A gentle pensiveness settled upon her. She looked the goddess Patience. She was unconceivably lovely. Laure said to her one day, after a long gaze at her,

'I fear I shall never hate that madman as I ought. Certainly when I think of his conduct I could strike him in the face.' Here she clenched her teeth, and made her hand into a sort of irregular little snowball. 'But when I look at you I cannot hate, I can but pity that imbecile—that—'

'Oh! sister,' said Josephine, imploringly, 'let us not degrade one we have honoured with our esteem—for our own sakes, not his,' added she hastily, not looking Laure in the face.

'No! forgive my vivacity. I was going to tell you I feel more pity than anger for him. Does he mean to turn monk, and forswear us all? if not, what does he intend to do? Where can he hope to find any one he can love after you? Josephine, the more I see of our sex, the more I see that you are the most beautiful woman in France, and by consequence in Europe.' The smile this drew was a very faint one. 'Were this so, surely I could have retained a single heart.'

'You have then forgotten your La Fontaine? Does he not sing how a dunghill cock found a pearl necklace, and disdained it? And why? Not that pearls are worth less than barley corns; but because he was a sordid bird, and your predecessors were wasted on him my Josephine. So I pity that dragoon who might have revelled in the love of an angel, and has rejected it, and lost it for ever. There, I have made her sigh.'

'Forgive me.'

'Forgive her? for sighing? I am, then, very tyrannical.'

One day Laure came into the room where the baroness, Doctor St. Aubin, and Josephine were sitting. She sat down unobserved.

But Josephine, looking up a minute after, saw at a glance that something had happened. Laure, under a forced calmness, was in great emotion and anxiety. Their eyes met. Laure made her a scarce perceptible signal, and immediately after got up and left the room.

Josephine waited a few seconds; then rose and

went out, and found Laure in the passage, as she expected.

'My poor sister, have you courage?'

'He is dead!' gasped Josephine.

'No! he lives. But he is dead to us and France. Oh! Josephine, have you courage?'

'I have,' faltered Josephine, quivering from head to foot.

'You know Dard, who works about here for love of Jacintha? For months past I have set him to speak to every soldier who passes through the village.'

'Ah! you never told me.'

'Had you known my plan, you would have been for ever on the *qui vive*; and your tranquillity was dear to me. It was the first step to happiness. Hundreds of soldiers have passed, and none of them knew him even by name. To-day, Joséphine, two have come that know all!'

'All! Laure—Laure!'

'He is disloyal to his country. What wonder he is a traitor to you!'

'It is false!'

'The men are here. Come, will you speak to them?'

'I cannot. But I will come—you speak; I shall hear.'

They found in the kitchen two dismounted dragoons, before whom Jacintha had set a bottle of wine.

They arose and saluted the ladies.

'Be seated, my brave men,' said Laure, 'and

tell me what you told Dard about Captain Dujardin.'

'Don't stain your mouth with the captain my little lady. He is a traitor!'

'How do you know?'

'Marcellus! mademoiselle asks us how we know Captain Dujardin to be a traitor. Speak.'

Marcellus, thus appealed to, told Laure after his own fashion that he knew the captain well: that one day the captain rode out of the camp and never returned: that at first great anxiety was felt on his behalf, for the captain was a great favourite, and passed for the smartest soldier in the division: that after a while anxiety gave place to some very awkward suspicions, and these suspicions it was his lot and his comrade's here to confirm. About a month later he and the said comrade and two more were sent, well mounted, to reconnoitre a Spanish village. At the door of a little inn they caught sight of a French uniform. This so excited their curiosity that he went forward nearer than prudent, and distinctly recognised Captain Dujardin seated at a table drinking, between two guerillas; that he rode back and told the others, who then came up and satisfied themselves it was so: that if any of the party had entertained a doubt, it was removed in an unpleasant way. He, Marcellus, disgusted at the sight of a French uniform drinking among Spaniards, took down his carabine and fired at the group as carefully as a somewhat restive horse permitted, at which, as if

by magic, a score or so of guerillas poured out from Heaven knows where, musket in hand, and delivered a volley: the officer in command of the party fell dead, Jean Jacques got a broken arm, and his own horse was wounded in two places, and fell from loss of blood a few furlongs from the French camp, to the neighbourhood of which the vagabonds pursued them hallooing and shouting and firing like barbarous banditti as they were.

'However, here I am,' concluded Marcellus, 'invalided for a while, my little ladies, but not expended yet: we will soon dash in among them again for death or glory! Meantime,' concluded he, filling both glasses, 'let us drink to the eyes of beauty (military salute), and to the renown of France—and double damnation to all her traitors, like that Captain Dujardin—whose neck may the devil twist.'

In the middle of this toast Josephine, who had stood rooted to one place with eyes glaring upon each speaker in turn, uttered a feeble cry like a dying hare, and crept slowly out of the room with the carriage and manner of a woman of fifty.

Laure's first impulse was to follow Josephine, but this would have attracted attention to her despair. She had the tact and resolution to remain and say a few kind words to the soldiers, and then she retired and darted up by instinct to Josephine's bedroom. The door was locked.

'Josephine! Josephine!' No answer.

'I want to speak to you. I am frightened—oh! do not be alone!'

A choking voice answered, 'I am not alone—I am with God and the saints. Give me a little while to draw my breath.' Laure sank down at the door, and sat close to it, with her head against it sobbing bitterly. The sensitive little love was hurt at not being let in, such a friend as she had proved herself. But this personal feeling was but a small fraction of her grief and anxiety.

A good half hour had elapsed when Josephine, pale and stern as no one had ever seen her till that hour, suddenly opened the door. She started at sight of Laure couched sorrowful on the threshold; her stern look relaxed into tender love and pity; she sank on her knees and took her sister's head quickly to her bosom. 'Oh, my little heart have you been here all this time?' 'Oh! oh! oh!' was all the little heart could reply.

Then Josephine sat down, and took Laure in her lap, and caressed and comforted her, and poured words of gratitude and affection over her like a warm shower.

The sisters rose hand in hand.

Then Laure suddenly seized Josephine, and looked long and anxiously down into her eyes. They flashed fire under the scrutiny. 'Yes, it is ended. I could not despise and love. I am dead to him, as he is dead to France.'

'Ah! I hoped so—I thought so; but you frightened me. My noble sister, were I ever to

lose your esteem I should die. Oh, how awful yet how beautiful is your scorn! For worlds I would not be that Cam——' Josephine laid her hand imperiously on Laure's mouth.

'To mention that man's name to me will be to insult me! De Beaurepaire I am, and a Frenchwoman! Come, love, let us go down and comfort our mother.'

They went down; and this patient sufferer and high-minded conqueror of her own accord took up a common-place book, and read aloud for two mortal hours to her mother and St. Aubin. Her voice never wavered.

To feel that life is ended—to wish existence, too, had ceased; and so to sit down, an aching hollow, and take a part and sham an interest in twaddle to please others—such are woman's feats. How like nothing at all they look!

A man would rather sit on the buffer of a steam engine and ride at the great Redan.

Laure sat at her elbow, a little behind her, and turned the leaves, and on one pretence or other held Josephine's hand nearly all the rest of the day. Its delicate fibres remained tense like a greyhound's sinews after a race, and the blue veins rose to sight in it, though her voice and eyes were mastered.

So keen was the strife—so matched the antagonists—so hard the victory!

For ire and scorn are mighty.

And noble blood in a noble heart is a hero.

And Love is a Giant.

CHAPTER II.

About this time, the French provinces were organized upon a half military plan, by which all the local authorities radiated towards a centre of government. This feature has survived subsequent revolutions and political changes.

In days of change, youth is always at a premium; because, though experience is valuable, the experience of one order of things unfits ordinary men for another order of things. A good many old fogies in office were shown to the door, and a good deal of youth and energy infused into the veins of provincial government.

Citizen Edouard Riviere, who had but just completed his education with singular *éclat* at a military school, was one fine day ordered into Brittany to fill a responsible post under the Commandant Raynal.

Nervousness in a new situation generally accompanies talent. The young citizen, as he rode to present his credentials at head quarters, had his tremors as well as his pride; the more so as his new chief was a blunt, rough soldier, that had risen

from the ranks, and bore a much higher character for zeal and moral integrity than for affability.

While the young citizen rides in his breeches and English top boots, his white waistcoat and cravat, his abundant shirt frill, his short-waisted blue coat with flat gilt buttons, his pig tail, his handsome though beardless face and eager eyes, to this important interview, settling beforehand after the manner of novices what he shall say, what shall be said to him, and what he shall reply, let us briefly dispose of commandant Raynal's previous history.

He was the son of a widow that kept a grocer's shop in Paris. She intended him for spice, but he thirsted for glory and vexed her. 'Soldiering in time of peace,' said she, 'such nonsense—it is like swimming on a carpet.' War came and robbed her satire of its point. The boy was resolute. The mother yielded now; she was a Frenchwoman to the back bone.

In the armies of the Republic a good soldier rose with unparalleled certainty, and rapidity too; for when soldiers are being mowed down like oats, it is a glorious time for such of them as keep their feet. Raynal rose through all the intervening grades to be a commandant and one of the general's aides-du-camp, and a colonel's epaulettes glittered in sight. All this time Raynal used to write to his mother, and joke her about the army being such a bad profession, and as he was all for glory, not money, he lived with Spartan frugality, and

saved half his pay and all his prize money for the old lady in Paris.

And here this prosperous man had to endure a great disappointment; on the same day that he was made commandant came a letter into the camp. His mother was dead after a short illness. This was a terrible blow to the simple rugged soldier, who had never had much time nor inclination to flirt with a lot of girls, and toughen his heart.

He came back to Paris honoured and rich, but downcast.

On his arrival at the old place it seemed to him not to have the old look. It made him sadder. To cheer him up they brought him a lot of money. The widow's trade had taken a wonderful start the last few years, and she had been playing the same game as he had, living on tenpence a day and saving all for him. This made him sadder.

'What have we both been scraping all this dross together for? I would give it all to sit one hour by the fire, with her hand in mine, and hear her say, "Scamp, you made me unhappy when you were young, but I have lived to be proud of you."'

He found out the woman who had nursed her, flung more five-franc pieces into her lap than she had ever seen in one place before, applied for active service, no matter what, obtained at once this post in Brittany, and went gloomily from Paris, leaving behind him the reputation of an ungracious brute devoid of sentiment. In fact, the

one bit of sentiment in this Spartan was any thing but a romantic one; at least I am not aware of any successful romance that turns on filial affection; but it was an abiding one. Here is a proof. It was some months after he had left Paris, and, indeed, as nearly as I can remember, a couple of months after young Riviere's first interview with him, that, being in conversation with Monsieur Perrin the notary, he told him he thought he never should cease to feel this regret.

The notary smiled incredulous, but said nothing.

'We were fools to scrape all this money together; it is no use to her, and, I am sure, it is none to me!'

'Is it permitted to advise you?' asked his friend persuasively.

'Speak!'

'This very money, which your elevated nature contemns, may be made the means of healing your wound. There are ladies, fair and prudent, who would at once capitulate—he! he!—to you, backed, as you are, by two or three hundred thousand francs. One of these, by her youth and affection, would in time supply the place of her, your devotion to whose memory does you so much credit. That sum would also enable you to become the possessor of an estate—a most advisable investment, since estates are just now unreasonably depressed in value. Its wood and water would soothe your eye, and relieve your sorrow by the sight of your wealth in an enjoyable form.'

'Halt! say that again in half the words!' roared the commandant roughly.

'You can buy a fine estate and a chaste wife with the money,' snapped this smooth personage, substituting curt brutality for honeyed prolixity. (*Aside*)—'Marriage contract so much—commission so much.'

The soldier was struck by the propositions the moment they hit him small and solid, like his much-loved bullets. He—

> Granted half his prayer
> Scornful the rest dispersed in empty air.

'Have I time to be running after women?' said he. 'But the estate I'll have, because you can get that for me without my troubling my head.' 'Is it a commisssion then?' asked the other sharply.

'*Parbleu!* Do you think I speak for the sake of talking?'

No man had ever a larger assortment of tools than Bonaparte, or knew better what each could do and could not do. Raynal was a perfect soldier as far as he went, and therefore was valued highly. Bonaparte had formed him, too—and we are not averse to our own work.

Raynal, though not fit to command a division, had the chic Bonaparte visibly stamped on him by that masterhand.

For a man of genius spits men of talent by the score. Each of these adopts one or other of his many great qualities, and builds himself on it. I

see the *maréchals* of the empire are beginning to brag—now every body else is dead. Well, dissect all those *maréchals*, men of talent every one of them, and combine their leading excellences in one figure, and add them up: Total—*a Napoleonetto.**

'Who is that? I am busy writing.'

'Monsieur the Commandant, I am the citizen Riviere, I am come to present myself to you, and to—'

'I know—come for orders.'

'Exactly, commandant.'

'Humph! Here is a report just sent in by young Nicole, who fills the same post as you, only to the northward. Take this pen and analyse his report, while I write these letters.'

'Yes, commandant.'

'Write out the heads of your analysis . . . Good: it is well done. Now take your heads home and act under them; and frame your report by them, and bring it me in person next Saturday.'

'It shall be done, commandant. Where are my quarters to be?'

The commandant handed him a pair of compasses, and pointed to a map on which Riviere's district was marked in blue ink.

'Find the centre of your district.'

* I mean, of course, as far as soldiering goes; but soldiering was only a part of the man, a brilliant part which has blinded some people as to the proportions of this colossal figure. He was a profound, though, from necessity, not a liberal statesman, a great civil engineer, a marvellous orator in the boudoir and the field, a sound and original critic in all the arts, and the greatest legislator in modern history.

'This point is the centre, commandant.'

'Then quarter yourself on that point. Good day, citizen.'

This was the young official's first introduction to the chic Bonaparte. 'This is a character,' said he; 'but, by St. Denis, I should not like to commit a blunder under his eye.'

Edouard Riviere had zeal, and he soon found that his superior was a great appreciator of that quality. His instructions, too, were clear and precise. Riviere lost his misgivings in a very few days, and became inflated with the sense of his authority and merit, and by the flattery and obsequiousness that wait on the former.

The commandant's compasses had pointed to the village near Beaurepaire, as his future abode.

The chateau was in sight from his apartments, and, on inquiry, he was told it belonged to a Royalist family—a widow and two daughters, who held themselves quite aloof from the rest of the world.

'Ah!' said the young citizen, who had all the new ideas, and had been sneering four years at the old ones. 'I see. If these *rococo* citizens play that game with me, I shall have to take them down.' Thus, a fresh peril hung over this family, on whose hearts and fortunes such heavy blows had fallen.

One evening, our young Republican officer, after a day spent in the service of the country, deigned to take a little stroll to relieve the cares of

administration. He imprinted on his beardless face the expression of a wearied statesman, and strolled through an admiring village. The men pretended veneration from policy. The women, whose views of this great man were shallower but more sincere, smiled approval of his airs.

The young puppy affected to take no notice of either sex.

Outside the village, Publicola suddenly encountered two young ladies, who resembled nothing he had hitherto met with in his district. They were dressed in black, and with extreme simplicity; but their easy grace and composure, and the refined sentiment of their gentle faces, told at a glance they belonged to the high nobility. Publicola, though he had never seen them, divined them at once by their dress and mien, and as he drew near, he involuntarily raised his hat to so much beauty and dignity, instead of poking it with a finger *à la République*. On this, the ladies instantly curtseyed to him after the manner of their party, with a sweep and a majesty, and a precision of politeness, that the pup would have laughed at if he had heard of it; but seeing it done, and well done, and by lovely women of high rank, he was taken aback by it, and lifted his hat again, and bowed again after he had gone by, which was absurd—and was generally flustered. In short, instead of a member of the Republican Government saluting private individuals of a decayed party that existed only by sufferance, a handsome, vain,

good-natured boy had met two self-possessed young ladies of rank and breeding, and had cut the figure usual upon such occasions.

For the next hundred yards, his cheeks burned, and his vanity was cooled. But bumptiousness is elastic in France as in England and among the Esquimaux.

'Well, they are pretty girls,' says he to himself. 'I never saw two such pretty girls together—they will do for me to flirt with while I am banished to this Arcadia.' (Banished from school.)

And 'awful beauty' being no longer in sight, Mr. Edouard resolved he would flirt with them to their hearts' content.

But there are ladies with whom a certain preliminary is required before you can flirt with them. You must be on speaking terms. How was this to be managed? 'Oh! it would come somehow or other if he was always meeting them —and really a man that is harassed, and worked as I am, requires some agreeable recreation of this sort.'

'Etc.'

He used to watch at his window with a telescope, and whenever the sisters came out of their own grounds, which unfortunately was not above three times a week, he would throw himself in their way by the merest accident, and pay them a dignified and courteous salute, which he had carefully got up before a mirror in the privacy of his own chamber.

In return he received two reverences that were to say the least as dignified and courteous as his own, though they had not had the advantage of a special rehearsal.

So far so good. But a little circumstance cooled our Adonis's hopes of turning a bowing acquaintance into a speaking one, and a speaking into a flirting.

There was a flaw at the foundation of this pyramid of agreeable sequences. Studying the faces of these courteous beauties, he became certain that no recognition of his charming person mingled with their repeated acts of politeness.

Some one of their humbler neighbours had the grace to salute them with the respect due to them: this was an unusual but not a strange occurrence to them even now. When it did happen, they made the proper return. They were of too high rank and breeding to be outdone in politeness. But that the same person met them whenever they came out, and that he was handsome and interesting —no consciousness of this phenomenon beamed in those charming countenances. Citizen Riviere was first piqued and then began to laugh at his want of courage, and on a certain day when his importance was vividly present to him he took a new step towards making this agreeable acquaintance: he marched up to the Chateau de Beaurepaire and called on the baroness of that ilk. He sent up his name and office with due pomp. Jacintha returned with a black-edged note.

'*Highly flattered by Monsieur de Riviere's visit, the baroness informed him that she received none but old acquaintances, in the present grief of the family, and of the KINGDOM.*'

Young Riviere was cruelly mortified by this rebuff. He went off hurriedly, grinding his teeth with rage.

'Cursed aristocrats! Ah! we have done well to pull you down, and we will have you lower still. How I despise myself for giving any one the chance to affront me thus! The haughty old fool! if she had known her interest, she would have been too glad to make a powerful friend. These Royalists are in a ticklish position: I can tell her that. But stay—she calls me De Riviere. She does not know who I am then! Takes me for some young aristocrat! Well then after all—but no! that makes it worse. She implies that nobody without a "De" to their name would have the presumption to visit her old tumble down house. Well, it is a lesson. I am a Republican, and the Commonwealth trusts and honours me; yet I am so ungrateful as to go out of the way to be civil to her enemies—to Royalists; as if those worn out creatures had hearts—as if they could comprehend the struggle that took place in my mind between duty and generosity to the fallen, before I could make the first overture to their acquaintance—as if they could understand the politeness of the heart, or anything nobler than curving and ducking and heartless etiquette. This is the last notice I

will ever take of that family, that you may take your oath of! ! ! !'

He walked home to the town very fast, his heart boiling and his lips compressed, and his brow knitted.

Just outside the town he met Josephine and Laure de Beaurepaire.

At the sight of their sweet faces his moody brow cleared a little, and he was surprised into saluting them as usual, only more stiffly, when lo! from one of the ladies there broke a smile so sudden, so sweet, and so vivid, that he felt it hit him on the eyes and on the heart. His teeth unclenched themselves, his resolve dissolved, and another came in its place. Nothing should prevent him from penetrating into that fortified castle, which contained at least one sweet creature who had recognized him, and given him a smile brimful of sunshine.

That night he hardly slept at all, and woke very nearly if not quite in love. Such was the power of a smile.

Yet this young gentleman had seen many smilers, but to be sure most of them smiled without effect, because they smiled eternally; they seemed cast with their mouths open, and their pretty teeth for ever in sight, which has a saddening influence on a man of sense—when it has any.

But here a fair pensive face had brightened at sight of him; a lovely countenance on which circumstances, not Nature, had impressed gravity,

had sprung back to its natural gaiety for a moment, and for him.

Difficulties spur us whenever they do not check us.

My lord sat at his window with his book and telescope for hours every day.

Alas! mesdemoiselles did not leave the premises for three days. But on the fourth industry was rewarded: he met them, and smiling himself by anticipation, it was his fate to draw from the lady a more exquisite smile than the last.

Smile the second made his heart beat so he could feel it against his waistcoat.

Beauty is power: a smile is its sword. These two charming thrusts subdued if they did not destroy Publicola's wrath against the baroness, and his heart was now all on a glow. A passing glimpse two or three times a week no longer satisfied its yearning. There was a little fellow called Dard who went out shooting in the capacity of a beater—this young man seemed to know a great deal about the family. He told him that the ladies of Beaurepaire went to Mass every Sunday at a little church two miles off. 'The baroness used to go too, but now they have no carriage she stays at home. She won't go to church or anywhere else now she can't drive up and have a blazing lacquey to hand her out—"*Aristo va!*"'*

Riviere smiled at this flow of plebeian bile.

* Aristocrat go to!

Next Sunday saw him a political renegade. He failed in a prime article of Republican faith. He went to church.

The Republic had given up going to church: the male part in particular.

Citizen Riviere attended church and there worshipped—Cupid. He smarted for this. The young ladies went with higher motives, and took no notice of him. They lowered their long silken lashes over one breviary, and scarcely observed the handsome citizen. Meantime he, contemplating their pious beauty with earthly eyes, was drinking long draughts of intoxicating passion.

And when after the service they each took an arm of St. Aubin, and he with the air of an admiral convoying two ships choke full of specie, conducted his precious charge away home, our young citizen felt jealous, and all but hated the worthy doctor.

One day Riviere was out shooting, accompanied by Dard.

A covey of partridges got up wild, and went out of bounds into a field of late clover. 'It is well done, citizen,' shouted little Dard, 'at present we are going to massacre them.'

'But that is not my ground.'

'No matter: it belongs to Beaurepaire.'

'The last people I should like to take a liberty with.'

'You must not be so nice; they have no gamekeeper now to interfere with us: they can't afford

one. Aha! aristocrats! The times are changed since your pigeons used to devastate us, and we durst not shoot one of the marauders—the very pheasants are at our mercy now.'

'The more ungenerous would it be of us to take advantage.'

'Citizen, I tell you everybody shoots over Beaurepaire.'

'Oh! if everybody does it——'

In short Dard prevailed. A small amount of logic suffices to prove to a man of one and twenty that he follows rectitude when he follows his birds.

Our hero had his misgivings: but the game was abundant, and tamer than elsewhere.

In for a penny in for a pound. The next time they went out together, I blush to say he began with this very field of clover, and killed two brace in it. It was about four o'clock of this day when the sportsman and his assistant emerged from the fields upon the high road between Beaurepaire and the village, and made towards the latter.

They had to pass Bigot's auberge, a long low house all across which from end to end was printed in gigantic letters—

'ICI ON LOGE A PIED ET A CHEVAL.'*
'Here one lodges on foot and on horseback.'

Opposite this Dard halted and looked wistfully in his superior's face, and laid his hand pathetically on his centre.

* What a row the latter customers must make going up to bed!

'What is the matter? Are you ill?'

'Very, citizen.'

'What is it?'

'The soldier's gripes,' replied this vulgar little citizen, 'and only smell; the soup is just coming off the fire.'

This little Dard resembled (in one particular) Cardinal Wolsey, as handed down to us by the immortal bard, and by the portraits in Magdalen College.

'He was a man of an unbounded stomach.'

He had gone two hours past his usual feeding time, and was in affliction.

Riviere laughed and consented. 'We will have it in the porch,' said he.

The consent was no sooner out of his mouth than Dard dashed wildly into the kitchen.

Riviere himself was not sorry of an excuse to linger an hour in a place where the ladies of Beaurepaire might perhaps pass and see him in a new costume—his shooting cap and jacket, adorned with all the paraphernalia of the sport, which in France are got up with an eye to ornament as well as use.

The soup was brought out, and for several minutes Dard's feelings were too great for utterance.

But Riviere did not take after the great cardinal, especially since he had fallen in love. He soon dispatched a frugal meal; then went in and got some scraps for the dog, and then began to lay

the game out and count it. He emptied his own pocket and Dard's game bag, and altogether it made a good show.

The small citizen was now in a fit state to articulate.

'A good day's work, citizen,' said he, stretching himself luxuriously, till he turned from a rotundity to an oval; 'and most of it killed on the lands of Beaurepaire—all the better.'

'You appear not to love that family, Dard.'

'You have hit it, citizen. I do not love that family,' was the stern reply.

Edouard, for a reason before hinted at, was in no hurry to leave the place, and the present seemed a good opportunity for pumping Dard. He sent therefore for two pipes: one he pretended to smoke, the other he gave Dard: for this shrewd young personage had observed that these rustics, under the benign influence of tobacco, were placidly reckless in their revelations.

'By-the-by, Dard—(puff)—why did you say you disliked that family?'

'Because—because I can't help it; it is stronger than I am. I hate them, aristo—*va!*'—(puff.)

'But why?—why?—why?'

'Ah! good, you demand why?—(puff.) Because they impose upon Jacintha.'

'Oh?'

'And then she imposes upon me.'

'I do not quite understand. Explain Dard, and assure yourself of my sympathy'—(puff).

Thus encouraged Dard became loquacious.

'Those Beaurepaire aristocrats,' said he, with his hard peasant good sense, 'are neither one thing nor the other. They cannot keep up nobility, they have not the means—they will not come down off their perch, they have not the sense. No, for as small as they are they must look and talk as big as ever. They can only afford one servant, and I don't believe they pay her, but they must be attended on just as obsequious as when they had a dozen. And this is fatal to all us little people that have the misfortune to be connected with them.'

'Why how are you connected with them?'

'By the tie of affection.'

'I thought you hated them.'

'Clearly: but I have the ill-luck to love Jacintha, and she loves these aristocrats, and makes me do little odd jobs for them,' and here Dard's eyes suddenly glared with horror.

'Well! what of it?'

'What of it citizen, what? you do not know the fatal meaning of those accursed words?'

'Why it is not an obscure phrase. I never heard of a man's back being broken by little odd jobs.'

'Perhaps not his back, citizen, but his heart? if little odd jobs will not break that, why nothing will. Torn from place to place, and from trouble to trouble: as soon as one tiresome thing begins to go a bit smooth, off to a fresh plague—a new

handicraft to torment your head and your fingers over every day: indoors work when it is dry, out a doors when it snows—and then all bustle—no taking one's work quietly, the only way it agrees with a fellow: no repose. "Milk the cow, Dard, but look sharp; the baroness's chair wants mending—take these slops to the pig, but you must not wait to see him enjoy them; you are wanted to chop billets." Beat the mats—take down the curtains—walk to church (best part of a league) and heat the pew cushions—come back and cut the cabbages, paint the door, and wheel the old lady about the terrace, rub quicksilver on the little dog's back: mind he don't bite you to make himself sick! repair the ottoman, roll the gravel, clean the kettles, carry half a ton of water up three pair of stairs, trim the turf, prune the vine, drag the fish pond, and when you *are* there, go in and gather water lilies for Mademoiselle Josephine while you are drowning the puppies; that is little odd jobs: may Satan twist her neck who invented them!'

'Very sad all this,' said young Riviere, as gravely as he could; 'but about the family?'

'I *am* citizen. When I go into their kitchen to court Jacintha a bit, instead of finding a good supper there, which a man has a right to, courting a cook—if I don't take one in my pocket, there is no supper, not to say supper, for either her or me. I don't call a salad and a bit of cheese rind—supper! Beggars in silk and satin. Every sou

they have goes on to their backs, instead of into their bellies.'

'Nonsense, Dard. I know your capacity, but you could not eat a hole in their income, that ancient family.'

'I could eat it all, and sit here. Income! I would not change incomes with them if they'd throw me in a pancake a day. I tell you, citizen, they are the poorest family for leagues round; not that they need be quite so poor, if they could swallow a little of their pride. But no, they must have china and plate and fine linen at dinner; so their fine plates are always bare, and their silver trays empty. Ask the butcher, if you don't believe *me!*

'You ask him whether he does not go three times to the smallest shop-keeper, for once he goes to Beaurepaire. Their tenants send them a little meal and eggs, and now and then a hen, because they must; their great garden is chock full of fruit and vegetables, and Jacintha makes me dig in it gratis—and so they muddle on. And then the baroness must have her coffee as in the days of old, and they can't afford to buy it—so they roast —haw! haw!—roast a lot of horse beans that cost nothing, and grind them, and serve up the liquor in a silver cafetière, on a silver salver; *Aristo va!*'

'Is it possible?—reduced to this!—oh!'

'Perdition seize them! why don't they melt their silver into soup—why don't they sell the superfluous and buy the grub? and I can't see why

they don't let their house and that accursed garden, in which I sweat gratis, and live in a small house, and be content with as many servants as they can pay wages to.'

'Dard,' said Riviere thoughtfully, interrupting him, 'is it really true about the beans?'

'I tell you I have seen Mademoiselle Laure doing it for the old woman's breakfast; it was Laure invented the move. A girl of nineteen beginning already to deceive the world. But they are all tarred with the same stick—*Aristo va!*'

'Dard, you are a brute!'

'Me, citizen?'

'You! there is noble poverty, as well as noble wealth. I might have disdained these people in their prosperity, but I revere them in their affliction.'

'I consent,' replied Dard, very coolly. 'That is your affair; but permit me,' and here he clenched his teeth at remembrance of his wrongs, 'on my own part to say that I will no more be a scullery man without wages to these high minded starvelings, these illustrious beggars.' Then he heated himself red hot. 'I will not even be their galley slave. Next, I have done my last little odd job in this world,' yelled the now infuriated *factotum*. All is ended. Of two things one—either Jacintha quits those aristos, or I leave Jacin—eh?—ah!—oh!—ahem! How—'ow d'ye do, Jacintha?' and his roar ended in a whine, as when a dog runs barking out and receives in full career a cut from

his master's whip, his generous rage turns to whimper then and there. 'I was just talking of you, Jacintha,' faltered Dard, in conclusion.

'I heard you, Dard,' replied Jacintha, slowly, quietly, grimly.

Dard from oval shrank back to round.

The person whose sudden appearance at the door of the porch reduced the swelling Dard to his natural limits moral and corporeal, was a strapping young woman, with a comely peasant face somewhat freckled, and a pair of large black eyes surmounted by coal black brows that inclined to meet upon the bridge of the nose. She stood in a bold attitude, her massive but well formed arms folded so that the pressure of each against the other made them seem gigantic, and her cheek pale with wrath, and her eyes glistening like basilisks upon citizen Dard. Had petulance mingled with her wrath, Riviere would have howled with laughter at Dard's discomfiture, and its cause; but a handsome woman, boiling with suppressed ire, has a touch of the terrible, and Jacintha's black eyes, and lowering black brows, gave her, in this moment of lofty indignation, a grander look than belonged to her. So even Riviere put down his pipe, and gazed up in her face with a shade of misgiving.

She now slowly unclasped her arms, and with her great eye immovably fixed on Dard, she pointed with a commanding gesture towards Beaurepaire. Citizen Dard was no longer master of

his own limbs; he was even as a bird fascinated by a rattlesnake; he rose slowly, with his eyes fastened to hers, and was moving off like an ill-oiled automaton in the direction indicated; but at this a suppressed snigger began to shake Riviere's whole body till it bobbed up and down on the seat. That weakened the spell: Dard turned to him ruefully.

'There citizen,' he cried, 'do you see that imperious gesture? Now I'll tell you what that means—that means you promised to dig in the aristocrat's garden this afternoon—so march! Here, then, is one that has gained nothing by kings being put down, for I am ruled with a rod of iron. Thank your stars, citizen, that you are not in my place.'

'Dard,' retorted Jacintha, 'if you don't like your place you can quit it. I know two or three that will be glad to take it. There, say no more; now I am here I will go back to the village, and we shall see whether all the lads recoil from a few little jobs to be done by my side, and paid by my friendship.'

'No! no! Jacintha; don't be a fool! I am going; there, I am at your service, my dear friend. Come!'

'Go then; you know what to do.'

'And leave you here?' 'Yes,' said Jacintha. 'I must speak a word to monsieur—you have rendered it necessary.'

The subjugated one crept to Beaurepaire, but

often looked behind him. He did not relish leaving Jacintha with the handsome young citizen, especially after her discovery that there were better men in the district than himself.

Jacintha turned to young Riviere, and spoke to him in a very different tone—coldly but politely.

'Monsieur will think me very hardy thus to address a stranger, but I ought not to allow monsieur to be deceived, and those I serve belied.'

'There needs no excuse, female citizen. I am at your service: be seated.'

'Many thanks, monsieur; but I will not sit down, for I am going immediately.'

'All the worse, female citizen. But I say, it seems to me then you heard what Dard was saying to me. What did you listen? Oh fie!'

'No, monsieur, I did not listen,' replied Jacintha, haughtily. 'I am incapable of it; there was no necessity. Dard bawled so loud the whole village might hear. I was passing, and heard a voice I knew raised so high, I feared he was drunk; I came therefore to the side of the porch—with the best intentions. Arrived there, words struck my ear that made me pause. I was so transfixed I could not move. Thus, quite is spite of myself, I suffered the pain of hearing his calumnies; you see, monsieur, that I did not play the spy on you; moreover, that character would nowise suit with my natural disposition. I heard too your answer, which does you so much credit, and I instantly resolved that you should not be imposed upon.'

'Thank you, citizeness.'

'Neither the family I serve, nor myself, are reduced to what that little fool described. I ought not to laugh, I ought to be angry; but after all it was only Dard, and Dard is a notorious fool. There, monsieur,' continued she graciously, 'I will be candid, I will tell you all. It is perfectly true that the baron contracted debts, and that the baroness, out of love for her children, is paying them off as fast as possible; that the estate may be clear before she dies. It is also true that these heavy debts cannot be paid off without great economy. But let us distinguish. Prudence is not poverty; rather, my young monsieur, it is the thorny road to wealth.'

'That is neatly expressed, citizeness?'

'Would monsieur object to call me by my name, since that of citizen is odious to me and to most women?'

'Certainly not, Mademoiselle Jacintha, I shall even take a pleasure in it, since it will seem to imply that we are making a nearer acquaintance, mademoiselle.'

'Not mademoiselle, any more than citizen. I am neither demoiselle, nor dame, but plain Jacintha.'

'No! no! no! not plain Jacintha! Do you think I have no eyes then, pretty Jacintha?'

'Monsieur, a truce to compliments! Let us resume!'

'Be seated, then, pretty Jacintha!'

'It is useless, monsieur, since I am going im-

mediately. I will be very candid with you. It is about Dard having no supper up at Beaurepaire. This is true. You see I am candid and conceal nothing. I will even own to you that the baroness, my mistress, would be very angry if she knew supper was not provided for Dard; in a word, I am the culprit. And I am in the right. Listen. Dard is egoist. You may even, perhaps, have yourself observed this trait.'

'Glimpses of it—ha! ha! ha!—he! ho!'

'Monsieur, he is egoist to that degree that he has not a friend in the world but me. I forgive him, because I know the reason; he has never had a headache or a heartache in his life.'

'I don't understand you, Jacintha.'

'Monsieur, at your age there are many things a young man does not understand. But though I make allowances for Dard, I know what is due to myself. Yes, he is so egoist, that, were I to fill that paunch of his, I should no longer know whether he came to Beaurepaire for me or for himself. Now Dard is no beauty, monsieur; figure to yourself that he is two inches shorter than I am.'

'Oh, Heaven! he looks a foot.'

'He is no scholar neither, and I have had to wipe up many a sneer and many a sarcasm on his account; but up to now I have always been to reply that this five feet two inches of egoism loves me disinterestedly; and the moment I doubt this point I give him his *congé*—poor little fellow!

Now you comprehend all, do you not? Confess that I am reasonable.'

'Parbleu! I say, I did not think your sex had been so sagacious.'

'You saw me on the brink of giving the poor little being his dismissal?'

'I saw and admired. Well then fellow cit—ah! pardon—Jacintha: so then the family at Beaurepaire are not in such straits as Dard pretends?'

'Monsieur, do I look like one starved?'

'By Jove, no!—by Ceres, I mean!'

'Are my young mistresses wan—and thin—and hollow-eyed?'

'Treason!—blasphemy!—ah! no. By Venus and Hebe, no!'

Jacintha smiled at this enthusiastic denial, and also because her sex smile when words are used they do not understand—guess why! She resumed —'When a cup overflows it cannot be empty; those have enough who have to spare; now how many times has Dard himself sent or brought a weary soldier to our kitchen by Mademoiselle Laure's own orders?'

'I can believe it.'

'And how many times have I brought a bottle of good Medoc for them from the baroness's cellar?'

'You did well. I see; Dard's egoism blinded him: they are prudent, but neither stingy or poor. All the better. But stay!—the coffee—the beans.'

Jacintha coloured and seemed put out, but it was only for a moment; she smiled good-humouredly

enough and put her hand in her pocket and drew out a packet. 'What is that?'

'Permit me; it is coffee, and excellent if I may judge by the perfume; you have just bought it in the village?' Jacintha nodded.

'But the beans!'

'The beans!—the beans! Well—he! he!—Monsieur we have a little merry angel in the house called Mademoiselle Laure. She set me one day to roast some beans—the old doctor wanted them for some absurd experiment. Dard came in, and seeing something cooking, "What are they for?" said he, "what in Heaven's name are they for?" His curiosity knew no bounds. I was going to tell him, but Mademoiselle Laure gave me a look. "To make the family coffee to be sure," says she; and the fool believed it.'

Riviere and Jacintha had a laugh over Dard's credulity.

'Well, Jacintha, thank Heaven! Dard is mistaken; and yet do you know I half regret they are not as poor, no not quite, but nearly as poor, as he described them—for then—'

'What then?'

'You need not be angry now.'

'Me, monsieur? One is in no haste to be angry with such a face as yours my young monsieur.'

'Well, then, I should have liked them to be a little poor, that I might have had the pleasure and the honour of being useful to them.'

'How could you be of use to them?'

'Oh, I don't know—in many ways—especially now I have made your acquaintance—you would have told me what to do. I would not have disobeyed you, for you are a treasure, and I see you love them sincerely; it is a holy cause; it would have been I mean; and we should have been united in it, Jacintha.'

'Ah yes! as to that, yes.'

'We would have concerted means to do them kindness secretly—without hurting their pride. And then I am in authority, Jacintha.'

'I know it, monsieur. Dard has told me.'

'In great authority for one so young. They are Royalists—my secret protection might have been of wonderful service to them, and I could have given it them without disloyalty to the State; for, after all, what has the Republic to dread from women?'

Through all this, which the young fellow delivered not flowingly, but in a series of little pants, each from his heart, Jacintha's great black eye dwelt on him calm but secretly inquisitive, and on her cheek a faint colour came and went two or three times.

'These sentiments do you honour, my pretty monsieur,' (dwelling tenderly on the pretty.)

'And so do yours do you,' cried the young man warmly. 'Let us be friends, us two, who though of different parties, understand one another. And let me tell you Mademoiselle the Aristocrat, that we Republicans have our virtues too.'

'Henceforth I will believe this for your sake, my child.'

'I am going to tell you one of them.'

'Tell me.'

'It is this—we can recognise and bow to virtue in whatever class we find it. I revere you, cit—ahem!—henceforth Jacintha is to me a word that stands for loyalty, fidelity, and unselfish affection. These are the soul of nobility — titles are its varnish. Such spirits as you, I say, are the ornaments of both our sexes, of every rank, and of human nature. Therefore give me your pretty brown hand a moment, that I may pay you a homage I would not offer to a selfish, and, by consequence a vulgar, duchess.'

Jacintha coloured a little: but put out her hand with a smile, and with the grace that seems born with French women of all classes. Riviere held the smiling peasant's hand, and bowed his head and just touched it with his lips.

A little to his surprise, the moment he relaxed his hold of it, it began to close gently on his hand and hold it, and even pressed it a very little. He looked up, and saw a female phenomenon. The smile still lingered on her lip, but the large black eyes were troubled, and soon an enormous tear quietly rolled out of them and ran down her tanned cheek.

The boy looked wistfully in her face for an explanation.

She replied to his mute inquiry by smiling, and

pressing his hand gently, in which act another tear welled quietly up, and rippled over, and ran with a slant into the channel of the first. The inexperienced boy looked so sad at this that she pressed his hand still more, and smiled still more kindly. Then Edouard sat, and began to watch with innocent curiosity the tears arrive thus, two a minute, without any trouble, while the mouth smiled and the hand pressed his.

'Crying, Jacintha?'

'No, my friend—not that I am aware of.'

'Yes you are—good! here comes another.'

'Am I dear?—it is possible.'

'I like it—it is so pretty. I am afraid it is my fault. By the by, what is it for?'

'My friend, perhaps it is that you praised me too warmly: these are the first words of sympathy that have ever been spoken to me in this village, above all the first words of goodwill to the family I love so.'

'Yes! you do love them, and so do I.'

'Thank you! thank you!'

'What witchcraft do they possess? They make me, you, and, I think, every honest heart, their friend.'

'Ah monsieur—do not be offended—but believe me it is no small thing to be an old family. There, you see, I do not weep; on the contrary, I discourse. My grandfather served a baron of Beaurepaire. My father was their gamekeeper, and fed to his last hour from the baron's plate; he

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was disabled by ague for many years before he died was my poor father; my mother died in the house, and was buried in the sacred ground near the family chapel. Yes, her body is aside theirs in death, and so was her heart while she lived. They put an inscription on her tomb praising her fidelity and probity. Do you think these things do not sink into the heart of the poor?—praise on her tomb, and not a word on their own, but just the name, and when each was born and died, you know. Ah! the pride of the mean is dirt, but the pride of the noble is gold!

* 'For, look you, among parvenus I should be a servant, and nothing more; in this proud family I am a humble friend; of course they are not always gossiping with me like vulgar masters and mistresses—if they did, I should neither respect nor love them; but they all smile on me whenever I come into the room, even the baroness herself. I belong to them, and they belong to me, by ties without number, by the years themselves—reflect, monsieur, a century—by the many kind words in many troubles, by the one roof that sheltered us a hundred years, and the grave where our bones lie together till the day of God.'

Jacintha clasped her hands, and the black eyes shone out warm through their dew. Riviere's glistened too.

* The French peasant often thinks half a sentence, and utters the other half aloud, and so breaks air in the middle of a thought. Probably Jacintha's whole thought, if we had the means of knowing it, would have run like this—'Besides I have another reason. I could not be so comfortable myself elsewhere—for look you——'

'It is well said,' he cried; 'it is nobly said! But, permit me, these are ties that owe their force to the souls they bind. How often have such bonds round human hearts proved ropes of sand! They grapple *you* like hooks of steel—because you are steel yourself to the backbone. I admire you, cit—Jacintha dear. Such women as you have a great mission in France just now.'

'Is that true? What can we poor women do?'

'BRING FORTH HEROES! Be the mothers of great men—the Catos and the Gracchi of the future.'

Jacintha smiled. She did not know the Gracchi and their political sentiments; and they sounded well. 'Gracchi!' a name with a ring to it. People of distinction no doubt.

'That would be too much honour,' replied she modestly. 'At present I must say adieu!' and she moved off an inch at a time, and with an uncertain hesitating manner, looking this way and that 'out of the tail of her eye,' as the Italians and Scotch phrase it.

Riviere put no interpretation on this. 'Adieu then, if it must be so,' said he.

She caught sight of the game laid out: on this excuse she stopped dead short. She eyed it wistfully.

Riviere caught this glance. 'Have some of it,' cried he, 'do have some of it.'

'What should I do with game?'

'I mean for the chateau.'

'They have such quantities of it.'

'Ah! no doubt. All the tenants send it I suppose.'

'Of course they do.'

'What a pity! It is then fated that I am not to be able to show my goodwill to that family, not even in such a trifle as this.'

Jacintha wheeled suddenly round on him, and so by an instinct of female art caught off its guard that face which she had already openly perused. This done, she paused a moment, and then came walking an inch at a time back to him; entered the porch thoughtfully, and coolly sat down. At first she sat just opposite Riviere, but the next moment reflecting that she was in sight from the road, she slipped into a corner, and there anchored. Riviere opened his eyes, and while she was settling her skirts he was puzzling his little head.

'How odd,' thought he. 'So long as I asked her to sit down, it was always "no, I am going."'

'Yes, my friend, you have divined it!'

'Oh! have I? – ah, yes—divined what?'

'That I am going to tell you the truth. Your face as well as your words is the cause; oh yes, I will tell you all.'

'Is it about Beaurepaire?'

'Yes.'

'But you did tell me all; those were your very words.'

'It is possible; but all I told you was—inexact.'

'Oh no, Jacintha, that cannot be. I felt truth in every tone of your voice.'

'That was because you are true, and innocent, and pure. Forgive me for not reading you at a glance. Now I will tell you all.'

'Oh do! pray do!'

'Listen then!—ah my friend, swear to me by that sainted woman, your mother, that you will never reveal what I trust you with at this moment!'

'Jacintha, I swear by my mother to keep your secret.'

'Then, my poor friend, what Dard told you was not altogether false.'

'Good Heavens! Jacintha.'

'Though it was but a guess on his part; for I never trusted my own sweetheart as now I trust a stranger. You that have shown such good sentiments towards us, oh! hear and then tell me, can nothing be done? No, don't speak to me—let me go on before my courage dies; yes, share this secret with me, for it gnaws me, it chokes me. To see what I see every day, and do what I do, and have no one I dare breathe a word to; oh! it is very hard. Nevertheless, see on what a thread things turn: if one had told me an hour ago it was you I should open my heart to!

'My child, my dear old mistress and my sweet young ladies are—ah! no I can't! I can't!

'What a poltroon I am. Yes! thank you, your hand in mine gives me courage: I hope I am not doing ill. They are not economical. They are not stingy. They are not paying off their debts. My friend, the baroness and the demoiselles de Beaurepaire—are PAUPERS.'

CHAPTER III.

'PAUPERS?'

'Alas!'

'Members of the nobility paupers?'

'Yes; for their debts are greater than their means; they live by sufferance—they lie at the mercy of the law, and of their creditors; and every now and then these monsters threaten us, though they know we struggle to give them their due.'

'What do they threaten?'

'To petition government to sell the chateau and lands, and pay them—the wretches!'

'The hogs!'

'And then the worst of it is, the family can't do any thing the least little bit mean. I was in the room when M. Perrin, the notary, gave the baroness a hint to cut down every tree on the estate, and sell the timber, and lay by the money for her own use. She heard him out, and then, oh! the look she gave him—it withered him up on his chair.

'"I rob my husband's and my Josephine's estate of its beauty! cut down the old trees that show

the chateau is not a thing of yesterday, like your Directory, your Republic, and your guillotine!" So then, Monsieur Perrin, to soften her, said: "No, madame, spare the ancient oak of course, and indeed all the very old trees; but sell the others."

'"The others? what, the trees that my own husband planted? and why not knock down my little oratory in the park—he built it. The stones would sell for something—so would Josephine's hair and Laure's. You do not know perhaps, each of those young ladies there can sit down upon her back hair. Monsieur, I will neither strip the glory from my daughters' heads, nor from the ancient lands of Beaurepaire—nor hallow some Republican's barn, pig stye, or dwelling-house, with the stones of the sacred place where I pray for my husband's soul."

'She had been sitting quite quiet like a cat, watching for him. She rose up to speak, and those words came from her like puffs of flame from a furnace. You could not forget one of them if you lived ever so long. He hasn't come to see us since then, and it's six months ago.'

'I call it false pride, Jacintha.'

'Do you? then I don't,' said Jacintha, firing up.

'Well, no matter; tell me more.'

'I will tell you all. I have promised.'

'Is it true about the beans?'

'It is too true.'

'But this coffee that you have just bought?'

'I have not bought it; I have embezzled it. Every now and then I take a bunch of grapes from the conservatory. I give it to the grocer's wife. Then she gives me a little coffee, and says to herself, "That girl is a thief."'

'More fool she. She says nothing of the sort, you spiteful girl.'

'Then I secretly flavour my poor mistress's breakfast with it.'

'Secretly? But you tell Mademoiselle Laure.'

'How innocent you are!—Don't you see that she roasts beans that her mother may still think she drinks coffee; and that I flavour her rubbish on the sly, that Mademoiselle Laure may fancy her beans have really a twang of coffee; and for aught I know the baroness sees through us both, and smacks her lips over the draught to make us all happy; for women are very deep, my young monsieur—you have no idea how deep they are. Yes, at Beaurepaire we all love and deceive one another.'

'You make my heart sick. Then it was untrue about the wine?'

'No, it was not; we have plenty of that. The baron left the cellar brim full of wine. There is enough to last us all our lives; and while we have it, we will give it to the brave and the poor.'

'And pinch yourselves.'

'And pinch ourselves.'

'Why don't they swap the wine for necessaries?'

'Because they could not do a mean thing.'

'Where is the meanness? Am I the man to advise a mean thing?'

'Ah, no, monsieur. Well, then, they won't do a thing other barons of Beaurepaire never did; that is why they sit down to a good bottle of wine from their own cellar, and to grapes and peaches from their own garden, and even truffles from their own beech coppice, and good cream from their own cow, and scarce two sous' worth of bread, and butchers' meat not once a fortnight.'

'In short, they eat fifteen francs' worth of luxuries, and so have not ten sous for wholesome food?'

'Yes, monsieur.'

'Yes monsieur!' cried Riviere, spitefully mocking her; 'and don't you see this is not economy, but extravagance? Don't you see it is their duty as well as their interest to sell their wine, or some of it, and their fruit, and buy eatables, and even put by money to pay their debts?'

'It would be if they were vulgar people; but these are not grocers nor cheap Johns; these are the high *noblesse* of France.' 'These are a pack of fools,' roared the irritated Republican, 'and you are as bad as they.'

'I do not assert the contrary,' replied Jacintha humbly and lovingly, disarming his wrath with a turn of the tongue. 'My friend,' she continued in the same tone, 'at present our cow is in full milk; so that is a great help; but when she goes dry,

God knows what we shall do, for I don't.' And Jacintha turned a face so full of sorrow on him, that he was ashamed of having been in a rage with her absurdity.

'And then to come by and hear my own sweetheart, that ought to be on my side, running down those saints and martyrs to a stran——, to our best friend.'

'Poor Jacintha!'

'Oh! no; don't, don't! already it costs me a great struggle not to give way.'

'Indeed! you tremble.'

'Like enough—it is the nerves. Take no notice, or I could not answer for myself. My heart is like a lump of lead in my bosom at this hour. No! it is not so much for what goes on up at the chateau. That will not kill them. Love nourishes as well as food; and we all love one another at Beaurepaire. It is for the whisper I have just head in the village.'

'What?—what?'

'That one of these cruel creditors is going to have the estate and chateau sold.'

'Curse him!'

'He might as well send for the guillotine and take their lives at once. You look at me. You don't know my mistress as I do. Ah! butchers, if it is so, you will drag nothing out of that house but her corpse. And is it come to this? The great old family to be turned adrift like beggars to wander over the world? Oh, my poor mistress! oh,

my pretty demoiselles! that I played with and nursed ever since I was a child! I was just six when Josephine was born; and that I shall love till my last breath.'

The young woman, torn by the violence of a feeling so long pent up in her own bosom, fell to panting, and laughing, and sobbing, and trembling violently.

The statesman, who had passed all his short life at school and college, was frightened out of his wits, and ran to her side, and took hold of her and pulled her, and cried—'Oh! don't Jacintha; you will kill yourself, you will die!—this is frightful—help here! help!'

Jacintha put her hand to his mouth, and, without leaving off her hysterics, gasped out—'Ah! don't expose me.'

So then he didn't know what to do; but he seized a tumbler and with trembling hand filled it with wine, and threw himself on his knees, and forced it between her lips. All she did was to bite a piece out of the glass as clean as if a diamond had cut it. This did her good—destruction of sacred household property gave her another turn. 'There, I've broke your glass now,' she cried, with a marvellous change of tone; and she came to, and sobbed and cried reasonably. The other young thing of the tender, though impetuous heart, set to comfort her.

'Poor Jacintha! dear Jacintha! I will be a friend both to them and you. There is a kiss not

to cry so.' Oh, oh, oh! And lo, and behold! he burst out crying himself.

This gave Jacintha another turn.

'Oh, my son! don't you cry! I will never s-s-suffer that.'

'How can I help it? Oh! It is you who make me—sobbing and weeping like.'

'Forgive me, little heart. I will be m-more reasonable—not to afflict you. Oh!—Oh!—see, I leave off. Oh!—I will take the wine.'

Edouard put the other side of the glass to her lips, and she supped a teaspoonful of the wine. This was her native politeness, not to slight a remedy he had offered. Then he put down the glass, and she drew his head lightly to her bosom, and he felt her quietly crying. She was touched to the core by his sympathy. As for him, he was already ashamed of the weakness he could not quite master, and was not sorry to hide his face so agreeably.

'Oh dear! Now—oh! you are not to fancy (I can hear your heart beat where I am, Jacintha,) *I* ever cry. I have not done such a contemptible thing since I was a boy.'

'I believe it. Forgive me. It was all my fault. It is no discredit. Ah! no, my son; these tears do you honour, and make the poor Jacintha your friend.'

These foolish drops did not long quench our statesman's and puppy's manly ardour.

'Come, come!' he cried, 'let us *do* something,

not sit blubbering.' 'Ah! if we could do any thing,' cried Jacintha, catching fire at him.

'Why, of course we can. People never know what they can do till they try. *I* shall think of something, you may depend.' (Vanity revived.)

'And I must run to Beaurepaire; they will think I am lost.'

'Stop, you will take some of the game now.'

'That I will—from you.'

'Thank you. Quick — quick —for goodness' sake. Here, take these four birds. That is right: pin up your apron—that makes a capital pocket.'

'The hare would be more nourishing than the birds,' said Jacintha, timidly.

'You are to have the hare as well, of course; send me down Dard; he shall take her up.'

'No! no! Dard and I are bad friends. I will ask no favour of him. He shall be my suppliant all this day, not I his. Look at my arm, do you think that is afraid of a hare?'

'Why, it is half as big again as mine, Jacintha; for all that, I shall carry the hare up in my pocket. France is still France, whatever you may think; a pretty woman must not be let drag a hare about the nation—come—'

'Surely, monsieur does not think of accompanying me!'

'Why not?'

'Oh! as for that, I am no prude—it is a road too on which one meets no one—ah bah! if you are not ashamed of me, I am not of you—*allons*.'

They walked up the road in silence. Riviere had something on his mind, and Jacintha was demurely watching for it out of the tail of her eye. At last, ashamed of going along and not saying a word to rustic Hebe, he dropped out this in an absent sort of way: 'I shall never know by your manner whether you are telling the truth or —the reverse.' No answer. 'You do it beautifully.' No answer. 'So smooth and convincing.' No answer.

'Seriously then, I used to think it a crime, a sordid vice—but now I see that even a falsehood, coming from a pure heart, is purified, and becomes virtuous, pious.'

'Never!'

'And useful.'

'What use were mine? I had to unpick them the next minute—and do you think I did not blush like fire while I was eating my own words one after another?'

'I did not see you.'

'A sign I blushed inside, and that is worse. My young monsieur,' continued Jacintha gravely, 'listen to me. A lie is always two things—a lump of sin, and a piece of folly. Yes! women are readier and smoother at that sort of work than men—all the worse for them. Men lie at times to gain some end they are hard bent on; but their instinct is to tell the truth, those that are men at all. But women, especially uneducated ones like me, run to a lie the first thing, like rats to a hole.

Now, mark the consequence: women suffer many troubles, great and small; half of these come to them by the will of God; but the other half they make for themselves by their silly want of truth and candour—there!'

'Bless my soul! here is a sermon. Why, how earnest you are!'

'Yes, I am in earnest, and you should not mock me. Consider, I am many years older than you—you are not twenty, I think, and I am close upon five and twenty—and I have seen ten times as much life as you, though I have lived in a village.'

'Don't be angry, Jacintha; I listen to every word.'

'I am in earnest, my friend, because you terrified me when you smirked like that and talked of beautiful lies, pious lies, (why not clean filth?) and then quoted me to prove it. Innocence is so easily corrupted. And I could not sleep at night if my tongue had corrupted one so innocent and good and young as you my dear.'

'Now, don't you be alarmed,' cried the statesboy haughtily, 'you need not fear that I shall ever take after women in that or any thing else.'

'Mind they will be the first to despise you if you do—that is their way—it is one of them that tells you so.'

'Set your mind at ease fair moralist; I shall think of your precepts. I will even note down one of the brilliant things you said,' and he took

out his tablets. '"A lie is a—lump of sin, and a bit—no—a piece of folly, eh?"'

'That is it!' cried Jacintha gaily, her anxiety removed.

'I did not think you were five and twenty though.'

'I am then—don't you believe me?'

'Why not? Indeed how could I disbelieve you after your lecture?'

'It is well,' said Jacintha with dignity.

She was twenty-seven by the parish books.

Riviere relapsed into his reverie.

This time it was Jacintha who spoke first.

'You forgive me for breaking the glass, monsieur, and making you cry?'

'Bother the glass—what little things to think of; while I—and as for the other business—you did it fairly; you made a fool of me, but you began with yourself—please to remember that.'

'Oh! a woman cries as she spits—that goes for nothing—but it is not fair of her to make a man cry just because he has a feeling heart.'

'Stop!—"A woman—cries—as she spits!" Why Jacintha that is a coarse sentiment to come from you who say such beautiful things, and such wise things—now and then.'

'What would you have?' replied Jacintha with sudden humility. 'When all is done I am but a domestic; I am not an instructed person.'

'On reflection, if coarse it is succinct. I had

better note it down with the other—no—I shall remember this one without.'

'You may take your oath of that. Good things have to be engraved on the memory—bad ones stick there of themselves. Monsieur, we are now near Beaurepaire.'

'So I see. Well?'

'I don't come out every day—if monsieur has anything important to say to me now is the time.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean that all this chat is not what you want to say to me. There is something you have half a mind to tell Jacintha, and half a mind not. Do you think I can't read your face by this time? There, I stop to hear it before it is too late. Come, out with it.'

'It is all very well to say out with it, but I have not the courage.'

'It is then that you do not feel I am your friend.'

'Don't speak so, and don't look so kindly or I shall tell you—Jacintha——'

'My son.'

'It is going to be secret for secret between us two—is not that nice?'

'Delicious!'

'Ay; but you must swear as I did, for my secret is as important as yours—every bit.'

'I swear!'

'Then—Jacintha—I am in love!'

And having made the confession blushing, he

smiled a little pompously, for he felt it was a step that stamped him a man. Jacintha's face expanded with sacred joy at the prospect of a love affair; then she laughed at his conceit in fancying a boy's love could be as grave a secret as hers; finally she lowered her voice to a whisper, though no creature was in sight. 'Who is it dear?' and her eye twinkled, and her ear cocked, and all the woman bristled.

'Jacintha can't you guess?' and he looked down.

'Me? How should I know which way your fancy lies?'

But even as she said these words her eye seemed to give a flash inwards, and her vivid intelligence seized the clue in a moment. 'I was blind! I was blind! It's my young lady. I thought it was very odd you should cry for me, and take such an interest—ah! rogue with the face of innocence! But how and where was it done? They never dine from home. You have not been two months here—that is what put me off the very idea of such a thing. The saints forgive us he has fallen in love with her in church!'

'No, no. Why I have met her *eleven times* out walking with her sister, stupid, and twice she smiled on me. Oh Jacintha! a smile such as angels smile—a smile to warm the heart and purify the soul and last for ever in the mind.'

'Well I have heard say that "man is fire and woman tow," but this beats all. Ha! ha!'

'Oh! do not jest. I did not laugh at you.'

'I will not be so cruel, so ungrateful as to jest. Still—he! he!'

'No Jacintha, it is no laughing matter; I revere her as mortals revere the saints. I love her so that were I ever to lose all hope of her I would not live a day. And now that you have told me she is poor and in sorrow, and I think of her walking so calm and gentle—always in black, Jacintha—and her low curtsey to me whenever we met, and her sweet smile to me though her heart must be sad, oh! my heart yearns for her. What can I do for her? How shall I surround her with myself unseen—make her feel that a man's love waits upon her feet every step she takes—that a man's love floats in the air round that lovely head. And, Jacintha! if some day she should deign to ask who is this, whom as yet I know only by his devotion?'

'She will ask that question much earlier than you seem to think, Innocence.'

'Will she? bless you, Jacintha; but it is ungenerous to think of the reward for loving. No, I will entertain no selfish motives, I will love and prove my love whether there is any hope for me or not; dear Jacintha *is* there any hope for me, do you think?'

'There is hope for all men. I will do all I can for you, and tell you all I see; but after all it must depend on yourself; only I may hinder you from going at it in a hurry and spilling the milk

for ever. After all,' she continued, looking at the case more hopefully, 'the way to win such ladies as mine is to deserve them—not one in fifty men deserves such as they are, but you do. There is not a woman in the world that is too good for you.'

'Jacintha, that is nonsense. I deeply feel my inferiority.'

'And if you were, you wouldn't,' cried the sententious maid, one of whose secret maxims appears to have been 'point before grammar.'

'Jacintha, before I go, remember, if anything happens you have a friend out of the house.'

'And you a staunch friend in it.'

'Jacintha, I am too happy; I feel to want to be alone with all the thoughts that throng on me. Good bye,' and he was off like a rocket.

'My hare! my hare! my hare!' screeched Jacintha on the ascending scale.

'Oh you dear girl! you remember all the *little* things; my head is in a whirl—come out hare.'

'No! You take her round by the back wall and fling her over.'

Jacintha gave this order in a new tone—it was a pleasant one; but there was a little air of authority now that seemed to say, 'I have got your secret; you are in my power, you must obey me now my son; or—'

Riviere did as ordered, and when he came back Jacintha was already within the grounds of Beaurepaire. She turned and put a finger to her lips,

to imply dead secresy on both sides; he did the same, and so the vile conspirators parted.

Puppies, like prisoners and a dozen other classes, are of many classes stupidly confounded under one name by those cuckoos that chatter and scribble us dead, but never think. There is the commonplace young puppy, who is only a puppy because he is young. The fate of this is to outgrow his puppydom, and be an average man—sometimes wise, sometimes silly, and on the whole neither good nor bad. Sir John Guise was a puppy of this sort in his youthful day. I am sure of it. He ended a harmless biped: witness his epitaph—

HERE LIES
Sir John Guise.
No one laughs;
No one cries.
Where he is gone,
And how he fares,
No one knows,
And no one cares.

There is the vacant puppy, empty of everything but egotism, and its skin full to bursting of that. Eye, the colour of which looks washed out; much nose—little forehead—long ears.

Young lady, has this sort of thing been asking you to share its home and gizzard? On receipt of these present say 'No,' and ten years after go on your bended knees and bless me! Men laugh at and kick this animal by turns; but it is woman's executioner. Old age will do nothing for this but turn it from a selfish whelp to a surly old

dog. Unless Religion steps in, whose daily work is miracles.

There is the good-hearted intelligent puppy. Ah! poor soul, he runs tremendous risks.

Any day he is liable to turn a hero, a wit, a saint, an useful man. Half the heroes that have fallen nobly fighting for their country in this war and the last, or have come back scarred, maimed and glorious, were puppies; smoking, drawling, dancing from town to town, and spurring the ladies' dresses. They changed with circumstances, and without difficulty.

Our good-hearted intelligent puppy went from this interview with a servant girl—a man.

He took to his bosom a great and tender feeling that never yet failed to ennoble and enlarge the heart and double the understanding.

She he loved was sad, was poor, was menaced by many ills; then she needed a champion. He would be her unseen friend, her guardian angel. A hundred wild schemes whirled in his beating heart and brain as he went home on wings. He could not go in doors. He made for a green lane he knew at the back of the village, and there he walked up and down for hours. The sun set, and the night came, and the stars glittered; but still he walked alone, inspired, exalted, full of generous and loving schemes and sweet and tender fancies: a heart on fire; and youth the fuel, and the flame vestal.

CHAPTER IV.

This day so eventful to our ex-puppy's heart was a sad one up at Beaurepaire.

It was the anniversary of the baron's death.

The baroness kept her room all the morning, and took no nourishment but one cup of spurious coffee Laure brought her. At one o'clock she came down stairs. She did not enter the sitting-room. In the hall she found two chaplets of flowers; they were always placed there for her on this sad day. She took them in her hand, and went into the park. Her daughters watched her from the window. She went to the little oratory that was in the park; there she found two wax candles burning, and two fresh chaplets hung up. Her daughters had been there before her.

She knelt and prayed many hours for her husband's soul; then she rose and hung up one chaplet and came slowly away with the other in her hand. At the gate of the park filial love met her as Josephine, and filial love as Laure watched the meeting from the window.

Josephine came towards her with tender anxiety

in her sapphire eyes, and wreathed her arms round her, and whispered half inquiringly half reproachfully—'You have your children still.'

The baroness kissed her and replied with a half guilty manner—'No Josephine, I did not pray to leave you—till you are happy.'

'We are not unhappy while we have our mother,' replied Josephine all love and no logic.

They came towards the house together, the baroness leaning gently on her daughter's elbow.

Between the park and the angle of the chateau was a small plot of turf called at Beaurepaire the Pleasance, a name that had descended along with other traditions; and in the centre of this Pleasance or Pleasaunce stood a wonderful oak tree. Its circumference was thirty-four feet. The baroness came to this ancient tree, her chaplet in her hand. The tree had a mutilated limb that pointed towards the house. The baroness hung her chaplet on this stump.

The sun was setting tranquil and red; a broad ruby streak lingered on the deep green leaves of the prodigious oak.

The baroness looked at it awhile in silence.

Then she spoke slowly to the oak and said—'You were here before us—you will be here when we are gone.'

A spasm crossed Josephine's face, but she said nothing.

They went in together.

We will follow them. But first, ere the sun is

set, stay a few minutes and look at the Beaurepaire oak, while I tell you what was known about it, not the thousandth part of what it could have told if trees could speak as well as breathe.

The baroness did not exaggerate. The tree was somewhat older than even this ancient family. There was a chain of family documents, several of which related incidents in which this tree played a part. The oldest of these manuscripts was written by a monk, a younger son of the house, about five hundred years before our story. This would not have helped us much, but luckily the good monk was at the pains to collect all the oral traditions about it that had come down from a far more remote antiquity, and like a sensible man arrested and solidified them by the pen. He had a superstitious reverence for the tree; and probably this too came down to him from his ancestors, as it was certainly transmitted by him to the chroniclers that succeeded him. The sum of all is this. The first Baron of Beaurepaire had pitched his tent under a fair oak tree that stood *prope rivum*—near a brook. He afterwards built a square tower hard by, and dug a moat that enclosed both tree and tower and received the waters of the brook aforesaid. These particulars corresponded too exactly with the present face of things and the intermediate accounts, to leave a doubt that this was the same tree.

In these early days its size seems to have been nothing remarkable, and this proves it was still

growing timber. But a century and a half before the monk wrote it had become famous in all the district for its girth, and in the monk's own day had ceased to grow, but showed no sign of decay. The mutilated arm I have mentioned was once a long sturdy bough worn smooth as velvet in one part from a curious cause: it ran about as high above the ground as a full-sized horse, and the knights and squires used to be for ever vaulting upon it, the former in armour; the monk when a boy had seen them do it a thousand times.

The heart of the tree began to go, and then this heavy bough creaked suspiciously. In those days they did not prop a sacred bough with a line of iron post as now. They solved the difficulty by cutting this one off within six feet of the trunk; two centuries later, the tree being now nearly hollow, a rude iron bracket was roughly nailed into the stem, and running out three feet supported the knights' bough; for so the mutilated limb was still called.

What had not this tree seen since first it came green and tender as a cabbage above the soil, and stood at the mercy of the first hare or rabbit that should choose to cut short its frail existence!

Since then eagles had perched on its crown and wild boars fed without fear of man upon its acorns. Troubadours had sung beneath it to lords and ladies seated round or walking on the grass and commending the minstrels tales of love by exchange of amorous glances. It had seen a Norman

duke conquer England, and English kings invade France and be crowned at Paris. It had seen a woman put knights to the rout, and seen God insulted and the warrior virgin burned by envious priests with the consent of the curs she had defended and the curs she had defeated. Mediæval sculptors had taken its leaves, and wisely trusting to Nature had adorned many a church with those leaves cut in stone.

Why, in its old age it had seen the rise of printing, and the first dawn of national civilization in Europe. It flourished and decayed in France: but it grew in Gaul. And more remarkable still, though by all accounts it is like to see the world to an end, it was a tree in ancient history: its old age awaits the millennium: its first youth belonged to that great tract of time which includes the birth of Christ, the building of Rome, and the siege of Troy.

The tree had mingled in the fortunes of the family. It had saved their lives and taken their lives. One Lord of Beaurepaire hotly pursued by his feudal enemies made for the tree, and hid himself partly by a great bough partly by the thick screen of leaves. The foe darted in, made sure he had taken to the house, ransacked it, and got into the cellar where by good luck was store of Malvoisie: and so the oak and the vine saved the quaking baron.

Another Lord of Beaurepaire, besieged in his castle, was shot dead on the ramparts by a cross-

bowman who had secreted himself unobserved in this tree a little before the dawn.

A young heir of Beaurepaire climbing for a raven's nest to the top of this tree, whose crown was much loftier then than now, lost his footing and fell, and died at the foot of the tree: and his mother in her anguish bade them cut down the tree that had killed her boy. But the baron her husband refused, and said, what in the English of the day would run thus—'ytte ys eneugh that I lose mine sonne, I will nat alsoe lose mine Tre.' In the male the solid sentiment of the proprietor outweighed the temporary irritation of the parent. Then the mother we are told, bought fifteen ells of black velvet, and stretched a pall from the knights' bough across the west side to another branch, and cursed the hand that should remove it, and she herself 'wolde never passe the Tre neither going nor coming, but went still about.'

And when she died and should have been carried past the tree to the park, her dochter did cry from a window to the bearers, 'Goe about! goe about!' and they went about: and all the company. And in time the velvet pall rotted, and was torn and driven away *rapidis ludibria ventis:* and when the hand of Nature, and no human hand, had thus flouted and dispersed the trappings of the mother's grief, two pieces were picked up and preserved among the family relics: and the black velvet had turned a rusty red.

So the baroness did nothing new in this family

when she hung her chaplet on the knights' bough; and, in fact, on the west side, about eighteen feet from the ground, there still mouldered one corner of an atchievement an heir of Beaurepaire had nailed there two centuries before, when his predecessor died: 'for,' said he, 'the chateau is of yesterday, but the tree has seen us all come and go.' The inside of the tree was clean gone: it was hollow as a drum—not eight inches thick in any part; and on its east side yawned a fissure as high as a man and as broad as a street door. Dard used to wheel his wheel-barrow into the tree at a trot, and there leave it.

In spite of excavation and mutilation not life only but vigour dwelt in this wooden shell—the extreme ends of the longer boughs were firewood, touchwood, and the crown was time gone out of mind: but narrow the circle a very little to where the indomitable trunk could still shoot sap from its cruise deep in earth, and there on every side burst the green leaves in summer countless as the sand. The leaves carved centuries ago from these very models, though cut in stone were most of them mouldered, blunted, notched, deformed—but the delicate types came back with every summer perfect and lovely as when the tree was but their elder brother—and greener than ever: for from what cause Nature only knows, the leaves were many shades deeper and richer than any other tree could show for a hundred miles round—a deep green, fiery, yet soft; and then their multitude—

the staircases of foliage as you looked up the tree, and could scarce catch a glimpse of the sky—an inverted abyss of colour, a mound, a dome, of flake emeralds that quivered in the golden air.

And now the sun sets—the green leaves are black—the moon rises—her cold light shoots across one half that giant stem.

How solemn and calm stands the great round tower of living wood, half ebony, half silver, with its mighty cloud above of flake jet leaves tinged with frosty fire at one edge!

Now is the still hour to repeat in a whisper the words of the dame of Beaurepaire—'You were here before us: you will be here when we are gone.'

Let us leave the hoary king of trees standing in the moonlight, calmly defying time, and let us follow the creatures of a day; since what they were we are.

A spacious saloon panelled: dead but snowy white picked out sparingly with gold. Festoons of fruit and flowers finely carved in wood on some of the panels. These also not smothered with gilding, but as it were gold speckled here and there, like tongues of flame winding among insoluble snow.

Ranged against the walls were sofas and chairs covered with rich stuffs well worn. And in one little distant corner of the long room a grey-haired

gentleman and two young ladies sitting on cane chairs round a small plain table, on which burned a solitary candle; and a little way apart in this candle's twilight an old lady sat in an easy chair, in a deep reverie, thinking of the past, scarce daring to inquire the future. Josephine and Laure were working: not fancy work but needlework; Doctor St. Aubin writing. Every now and then he put the one candle nearer the girls. They raised no objection, only a few minutes after a white hand would glide from one or other of them like a serpent, and smoothly convey the light nearer to the doctor's manuscript. 'Is it not supper time?' inquired the doctor.

'One would think not. Jacintha is very punctual.'

'So she may be, but I have an inward monitor, mesdemoiselles; and by the way our dinner was I think more ethereal than usual.'

'Hush,' said Josephine, and looked uneasily towards her mother. 'Wax is so dear.'

'Wax?—ah!—pardon me,' and the doctor returned hastily to his work. Then Laure looked up and said—'I wonder Jacintha does not come—it is certainly past the hour,' and she pried into the room as if she expected to see Jacintha on the road. But she saw in fact very little of anything, for the spacious room was impenetrable to her eye. Midway from the candle to the distant door its twilight deepened, and all became shapeless and sombre.

The prospect ended half way sharp and black, as in those out o'door closets imagined and painted by a certain great painter, whose Nature comes to a full stop as soon as that great painter sees no further occasion for her, instead of melting by fine expanse and exquisite gradation into genuine distance as Nature does in Claude and in Nature. To reverse the picture, standing at the door you looked across forty feet of black, and the little corner seemed on fire, and the fair heads about the candle shone like the heads of St. Cecilias and Madonnas in an antique stained glass window.

At last the door opened, and another candle glowed upon Jacintha's comely peasant face in the doorway. She put down her candle outside the door, and started as the crow flies for the other light. After glowing a moment in the doorway she dived into the shadow and emerged into light again close to the table with napkins on her arm. She removed the work-box reverentially, the doctor's manuscript unceremoniously, and proceeded to lay a cloth, in which operation she looked at Josephine a point blank glance of admiration; then she placed the napkins; and in this process she again cast a strange look of interest upon Josephine. The young lady noticed it this time, and looked inquiringly at her in return, half expecting some communcation; but Jacintha lowered her eyes and bustled about the table. Then Josephine spoke to her with a sort of instinct of curiosity—that this look might find words.

'Supper is a little late to-night! is it not, Jacintha?'

'Yes, mademoiselle, I have had more to do than usual,' and with this she delivered another point-blank look as before, and dived into the palpable obscure and came to light in the doorway.

Josephine.—'Did you see that?'

Laure.—'What?'

Josephine.—'That look she gave me?'

Laure.—'No. What look?'

Josephine.—'A singular look, a look of curi—osity—one would almost say of admi—but no; that is impossible——'

St. Aubin (drily).—'Clearly.' He added after a pause: 'yet after all it is the prettiest face in the room.'

'Doctor!' cried Laure with fury.

'My child, I did not see you.'

'And how dare you call my Josephine pretty? the Madonna pretty? does that describe her? I am indignant.'

St. Aubin.—'Mademoiselle Laure, permit me to observe that by calling Mademoiselle *your* Josephine, you claim a monopoly that—ahem!—cannot possibly be conceded.'

Laure.—(haughtily): 'Why, whose Josephine is she but mine?'

St. Aubin.—(after coolly taking a pinch of snuff, and seeming to reflect): 'Mine.'

Here a voice at the fireplace put quietly in—'Twenty years ago Laure was not born, and my

good friend there had never seen Beaurepaire. Whose Josephine was she then, good people?' 'Mamma! whose is she now?' and Josephine was at her mother's knees in a moment.

'Good!' said the doctor to Laure. 'See the result of our injudicious competition. A third party has carried her off. Is supper never coming? Are you not hungry my child?'

'Yes, my friend—no! not very.'

Alas! if the truth must be told, they were all hungry. So rigorous was the economy in this decayed, but honorable house, that the wax candles burned to-day in the oratory had scrimped their dinner, unsubstantial as it was wont to be. Think of that, you in fustian jackets who grumble on a full belly. My lads, many a back you envy, with its silk and broad cloth, has to rob the stomach. The door opened; Jacintha appeared in the light of her candle a moment with a tray in both hands; and approaching was lost to view. Before she emerged to sight again a strange and fragrant smell heralded her. All their eyes turned with curiosity towards the unwonted odour, till Jacintha dawned with three roast partridges on a dish.

They were wonder struck. Jacintha's face was red as fire, partly with cooking, partly with secret pride and happiness: but she concealed it, and indeed all appearance of feeling, under a feigned apathy. She avoided their eyes, and resolutely excluded from her face everything that could imply she did not serve up partridges to this family

every night of her life. The young ladies looked from the birds to her, and from her to the birds, in mute surprise, that was not diminished by the cynical indifference printed on her face.

'The supper is served, Madame the Baroness,' said she, with a respectful curtsey and a mechanical tone, and, plunging into the night, swam out at her own candle, shut the door, and unlocking her face that moment, burst out radiant, and went down beaming with exultation; and with a tear in her eye, set to and polished all the copper stewpans with a vigour and expedition unknown to the new-fangled domestic.

'Partridges, mamma! What next?'

'Pheasants, I hope,' cried the doctor, gaily. 'And after them hares; to conclude with royal venison. Permit me ladies.' And he set himself to carve with zeal.

Now Nature is Nature, and two pair of violent eyes brightened and dwelt on the fragrant and delicate food with demure desire. For all that, when St. Aubin offered Josephine a wing, she declined it. 'No partridge?' cried the *savant*, in utter amazement.

'Not to-day, dear friend—it is not a feast day to-day.'

'Ah! no; what was I thinking of?'

'But you are not to be deprived,' put in Josephine, anxiously. 'We will not deny ourselves the pleasure of seeing you eat some.' 'What?' remonstrated St. Aubin, 'am I not one of you?'

The baroness had attended to every word of this. She rose from her chair and said quietly—'Both you and he and Laure will be so good as to let me see you eat them.'

'But mamma,' remonstrated Josephine and Laure in one breath.

'*Je le veux*,' was the cold reply.

These were words the baroness uttered so seldom that they were little likely to be disputed.

The doctor carved and helped the young ladies and himself.

When they had all eaten a little, a discussion was observed to be going on between Laure and her sister. At last St. Aubin caught these words. 'It will be in vain—even you have not influence enough for that Laure.'

'We shall see,' was the reply, and Laure put the wing of a partridge on a plate and rose calmly from her chair. She took the plate and put it on the little work table by her mother's side. The others pretended to be all mouths, but they were all ears.

The baroness looked in Laure's face with an air of wonder that was not very encouraging. Then, as Laure said nothing, she raised her aristocratic hand with a courteous but decided gesture of refusal.

Undaunted little Laure laid her palm softly on the baroness's shoulder, and said to her as firmly as the baroness herself had just spoken—

'*Il le veut ma mère!*'

The baroness was staggered. Then she looked steadily in silence at the fair young face—then she reflected. At last she said with an exquisite mixture of politeness and affection. 'It is his daughter who has told me "*Il le veut!*" I obey.'

Laure returning like a victorious knight from the lists, saucily exultant, and with only one wet eyelash, was solemnly kissed and petted by the other two.

Thus they loved one another in this great old falling house. Their familiarity had no coarse side. A form, not of custom but affection, it walked hand in hand with courtesy by day and night; *aristo va!*

The baroness retired early to rest this evening.

She was no sooner gone than an earnest and anxious conversation took place between the sisters. It was commenced in a low tone not to interrupt St. Aubin's learned lucubrations.

Josephine.—'Has she heard any thing?'

Laure.—'About our harsh creditor—about the threatened sale of Beaurepaire? Not that I know of. Heaven forbid!'

Josephine.—'Laure, she said some words to me to-day that make me very uneasy, but I did not make her any answer. She said, (we were by the great oak tree,) "You were here before us—you will be here after us."'

'O! heaven, who has told her? Can Jacintha have been so mad?'

'That faithful creature. Oh no! her great anxiety is lest my mother should know.'

'May Heaven bless her for having so much sense as well as fidelity. The baroness must never know this till the danger is past—poor thing! the daily fear would shake her terribly.'

Josephine.—'You have heard what we have been saying?'

St. Aubin.—'Every word. Let me put away this rubbish, in which my head but not my heart is interested, and let us unite heart and hand against this new calamity. Who has threatened to sell Beaurepaire?'

Josephine.—'A single creditor. But Jacintha could not tell me his name.'

St. Aubin.—'That will be easily discovered. Now as for those words of the baroness, do not be disquieted. You have put a forced interpretation on them my dear.'

Josephine.—'Have I, doctor?'

St. Aubin.—'The baroness is an old lady, conscious of her failing powers. She stood opposite an ancient tree. Something of this sort passed through her mind—"you too are old, older than I am, but you will survive me."'

Laure.—'But she said "us," not "me."'

St. Aubin.—'Oh! "us" or "me." Ladies are not very exact.'

Josephine.—'What you say is very intelligent, my friend; but—somehow—that was not what she meant.'

'It is the simplest interpretation of her words.'

'I confess it.'

'Can you give me any tangible reason for avoiding the obvious interpretation?'

'No. Only when you are so well acquainted with the face and voice of any one, as I am with dear mamma's, you can seize shades of meaning that are not to be conveyed to another by a bare account of the words spoken.'

'This is fanciful: chimerical.'

'I feel it may appear so.'

Laure.—'Not to me, I beg to observe: it is quite simple, perfectly notorious, and as clear as day.'

St. Aubin.—'To you possibly, enthusiastic maid; but I have an unfortunate habit of demanding a tangible reason for my assent to any given proposition.'

Laure.—'It is an unfortunate habit. Josephine dear, tell me now what was the feeling our mother gave you by the way she said those words.'

'Yes, dear. Well then'—here Josephine slightly knitted her smooth brow, and said slowly, turning her eyes inwards—'Our mother did not intend to compare the duration of our mortal lives with that of a tree.'

'*Petitio principii*,' said the doctor quietly.

'*Plaît-il?* On the other hand, if she had heard our impending misfortune, would she not have been less general? would she not have spoken to me, and not to the tree? I think then that our

dear mother had a general misgiving, a presentiment that we shall be driven from this beloved spot; and this presentiment found words at the sight of that old companion of our fortunes; but even if this be the right interpretation, I cannot see her come so near the actual truth without trembling; for I know her penetration; and oh! if it were ever to reach her ears that—alas! my dear mother.'

'It never shall, it never shall; to leave Beaurepaire would kill the baroness.'

'No doctor, do not say so.'

Laure.—'Let us fight against our troubles, but not exaggerate them. Mamma would still have her daughters' love.'

'It is idle to deceive ourselves,' replied St. Aubin. 'The baroness would not live a month away from Beaurepaire. At her age men and women hang to life by their habits. Take her away from her chateau, from the little oratory where she prays every day for the departed, from her place in the sun on the south terrace, and from all the memories that surround her here—she would bow her head and die.'

Here the *savant* seeing a hobby-horse near, caught him and jumped on.

He launched into a treatise upon the vitality of human beings, wonderfully learned, sagacious and misplaced. He proved at length that it is the mind which keeps the body of man alive for so great a length of time as fourscore years. He in-

formed them that he had in the earlier part of his studies carefully dissected a multitude of animals; frogs, rabbits, dogs, men, horses, sheep, squirrels, foxes, cats, &c., and discovered no peculiarity in man's organs to account for his singular longevity, except in the brain or organ of mind. Thence he went to the longevity of men with contented minds, and the rapid decay of the careworn. He even explained to these girls why no bachelor had ever attained the full age of man, which he was obliging enough to put at one hundred and ten years. A wife, he explained, is essential to vast longevity; she is the receptacle of half a man's cares, and of two thirds of his ill humour.

After many such singular windings very proper to a lecture room, he came back to the baroness; on which his heart regained the lost ascendancy over his head, and he ended a tolerably frigid discourse in a deep sigh.

'Oh doctor,' cried Laure, 'what shall we do?'

'I have already made up my mind. I shall have an interview with Perrin, the notary.'

'But we have offended him.'

'Not mortally. Besides the baroness was in the wrong.'

'Mamma in the wrong?'

'Excusably, but unquestionably. She was impetuous out of place. Maître Perrin gave her the advice, not of a delicate mind, but of a friend who had her interest at heart. He is under great obligations to this family. He can now repay them

without injury to himself; this is a flight of gratitude of which I believe even a notary capable. Are you not of my opinion, mademoiselle?'

Josephine's reply was rather feminine than point blank.

'I have already been so unfortunate as to differ once with my best friend;' and she lowered her lashes and awaited her doom.

'This dear poltroon,' cried Laure—'speak out!'

'Well, then, my friend, Monsieur Perrin does not inspire me with confidence.'

'Humph! have you heard anything against him?'

'No; it is only what I have observed; let us hope I am wrong. Well then, Laure, the man's face carries one expression when he is on his guard and another when he is not. His voice too is not frank. It is not a genuine part of himself as yours is dear doctor—and then it is not—it is not one.'

'Diable! has he two voices?'

'Yes! and perhaps more. When he is in this room his voice is—is—what shall I say? Artificial honey?'

'Say treacle,' put in Laure.

'You have said it Laure; that is the very word I was searching for; but out of doors I have heard him speak very differently, in a voice imperious, irascible, I had almost said brutal. Ay and the worst is that bad voice was his own voice.'

'How do you know that?'

'I don't know *how* I know it dear friend. Something tells me.'

'However, you can give a tangible reason of course,' said the doctor treacherously.

'No, my friend; I am not strong at reasons. Consider, I have not the advantage of being a *savant*. I am but a woman. My opinion of this man is an instinct, not a reason.'

The doctor's face was provoking.

Josephine saw it, but she was one not easily provoked. She only smiled a little sadly. Laure fired up for her.

'I would rather trust an instinct of Josephine's than all the reasons of all the *savants* in France!'

'Laure!' remonstrated Josephine, opening her eyes.

'Reasons?—straws!' cried Laure, disdainfully.

'Hallo!' cried St. Aubin, with a comical look.

'And there are always as many of these straws against the truth as for it. The Jansenists have books brim full of reasons. The Jesuits have books full against them. The Calvinists and all the heretics have volumes of reasons—*so* thick. Is it reason that teaches me to pray to the Madonna and the saints! and so—Josephine is right and you are wrong.'

'Well jumped. Alas! I am intimidated but not convinced.'

'Your mistake is replying to her, doctor,' said Josephine; 'that encourages her—a little virago that rules us all with iron. Come here, child, and

be well kissed for your effrontery; and now hold your tongue. Tell us your plan doctor, and you may count on Laure's co-operation as well as mine. It is I who tell you so.'

'She is right again, doctor,' said Laure, peeping at him over her sister's shoulder.

St. Aubin, thus encouraged, explained to them that he would, without compromising the baroness, write to Monsieur Perrin, and invite him to an interview. The result is certain. This harsh creditor will be paid off by a transfer of the loan, and all will be well. Meantime there is nothing to despond about; it is not as if several creditors were agreed to force a sale. This is but one, and the most insignificant of them all."

'Is it? I hope it may be. What makes you think so?' 'I know it, Josephine.'

The girls looked at one another.

'Oh I am not divining. My instincts are so feeble that I am driven for aid to that contemptible ally, Reason. Thus it is. Our large creditors are men of property, and such men let their funds lie unless compelled to move them. But the small mortgagee, the needy man, who has, perhaps, no investment to watch but one small loan, about which he is as anxious and as noisy as a hen with one chicken—he is the clamorous creditor, the harsh little egoist, who at the first apprehension of losing a crown piece would bring the Garden of Eden to the hammer. Go then to rest, my children, and sleep calmly. Heaven

watches over you, and this grey head leaves its chimeras when your happiness is in peril.'

'And there is no better head,' said Laure, affectionately—but she must add saucily—'when it does come out of the clouds;' and with this sauce in her very mouth she inclined her white forehead to Monsieur St. Aubin for his parting salute.*

The young ladies retired to rest, greatly reassured and comforted by their friend's confidence, and he with a sudden change of manner paced the apartment nervously till one in the morning. His brow was knitted, and his face sad, and if his confidence had been real, why then much of it oozed away as soon as he had no one to comfort or confute.

At one o'clock in the morning he sat down and wrote to the notary.

* The sparring between St. Aubin and Laure de Beaurepaire was not exactly what it looks on paper at first glance. But we soon come to the limit of the fine arts. The art of writing, to wit, tells you what people said but not how; yet 'how' makes often all the difference. When these two fenced in talk the tones and the manner were full of affection and playfulness, and robbed of their barb words, which, coarsely or unkindly uttered, might have stung. Look at those two distant cats fighting. They roll over one another in turn; they bite with visible fury, they scratch alternate. Tigers or theologians could do no more. In about two minutes a black head, a leaf torn out of Dr. Watts, and a tabby tail, will strew the field, sole relics of this desperate encounter. Now go nearer; you shall find that in these fierce bites the teeth are somehow kept back entirely, and the scratching is tickling done with the velvet paw, not the poisoned iron claw. The fighting resolves itself into two elements, play and affection. These combatants are never strange cats, or cats that bear each other a grudge. And this mock fighting is a favourite gambol with many animals: with none more so than with men and women, especially intelligent and finely tempered ones. Be careful not to do it with a fool. I don't tell you why, because the fool will show you.

He deplored the baroness's susceptibility, hinted delicately that she had in all probability already regretted it, and more broadly that he had thought her in the wrong from the first. If Monsieur Perrin shared in any degree his regret at the estrangement, there was now an opportunity for him to return with credit to his place as friend of the family. And to conclude, the writer sought a personal interview.

Let us follow this letter. It was laid on the notary's table the next afternoon. As he read it, a single word escaped his lips, 'Curious!'

He wrote an answer immediately.

St. Aubin was charmed with his reply, and its promptness. He drew the girls aside, and read them the note. They listened acutely.

'*Monsieur Perrin had never taken serious offence at the baroness's impetuosity, for which so many excuses were to be made. It was in pressing, indiscreetly perhaps, her interest, that he had been so unfortunate as to give her pain. He now hoped Monsieur St. Aubin would show him some way of furthering those interests without annoying her. He would call either on the doctor or on the baroness at any hour that should be named.*'

'There,' cried St. Aubin, 'is not that the letter of a friend, and an honest man, or at all events, an honest notary?'

'Oh yes! but is it not *too* pure?' suggested Josephine. Such an entire abnegation of self—is that natural—in a notary, too, as you observe?'

'Childishness! this is a polite note, as well as a friendly one—politeness always speaks a language the opposite of egoism, and consequently of sincerity—it is permitted even to a notary to be polite.'

'That is true—may I examine it?'

Josephine scanned it as if she would extract the hidden soul of each particular syllable. She returned it with a half sigh.

'I wish it had a voice and eyes, then I could perhaps—but let us hope for the best.'

'I mean to,' cried the doctor cheerfully. 'The man will be here himself in forty-eight hours. I shall tell him to be sure and bring his voice and his eyes with him; to these he will add of his own accord that little pony round as a tub he goes about on—another inseparable feature of the man.'

'Curious!' said the notary.

An enigmatical remark; but I almost think I catch the meaning of it. Forgive me for going back a step to explain.

Outside a small farm-house, two miles from Beaurepaire, stood a squab pony, dun coloured, with a white mane and tail. He was hooked by the bridle to a spiral piece of iron driven into the house to hang visitors' nags from by the bridle. The farmer was a man generally disliked and feared, for he was one of those who can fawn or bully as suits their turn; just now, however, he was in competent hands. The owner of the squab dun was talking to him in his own kitchen as

superiors are apt to speak to inferiors, and as superior very seldom speaks to anybody.

The farmer, for his part, was waiting his time to fire a volley of oaths at his visitor, and kick him out of the house. Meantime, cunning first—he was watching to find out what could be the notary's game.

'So you talk of selling up my friend the baroness?'

'Well, notary,' replied the other coolly, my half year's interest has not been paid; it is due this two months.'

'Have you taken any steps?'

'Not yet; but I am going to the mayor this afternoon—if you have no objection' (this with a marked sneer).

'You had better break your leg, and stay at home.'

'Why so? if you please.'

'Because if you do you are a ruined man.'

'I'll risk that. Haw! haw! Your friends will have to grin and bear it, as we used to under the kings. They have no one to take their part against me that I know of, without it is you; and you are not the man to pay other folks' debts I should say.'

'They have a friend who will destroy you if you are so base as to sell Beaurepaire for your miserable six thousand francs.'

'Who is the man? if it is not asking too much.'

'You will know all in good time. You owe twelve thousand francs to François Brocard your cousin.' Bonard changed colour.

'How do you know that? He promised faithful not to tell a soul.'

'When he promised he did not know you intended to get drunk and call his wife an unpolite name.'

'I never got drunk, and I never called the jade an ugly name.'

'You lie, my man.'

'Well, monsieur, suppose I did; hard words break no bones; he need not talk—*he* thrashes her, the pig.'

'She says *not*. But that is not the point; there are women who like to be thrashed; but there is not one who likes to be called titles reflecting on her discretion. So Madame Brocard has given you a lesson not to injure the weak—especially the weak that are strong—women to wit. This one was strong enough to make François sell your debt to an honest man, who is ready to receive payment at this hour.'

'Is it a jest? How can I pay twelve thousand francs all in a moment? Let him give me proper time, and it is not twelve thousand francs that will trouble Jacques Bonard, you know that, monsieur.'

'I know that to pay it you must sell your ricks, your horses, your chairs and tables, and the bed you sleep on.'

'Yes I can! yes I can! especially if I have your good word, monsieur; and I know you will —ten to one if my new creditor (curse him!) is not known to you.'

'He is.'

'There then it is all right. Every man in the department respects you. I'll be bound you can turn him round your finger whoever he is.'

'I can.'

'There is a weight off my stomach. Well, monsieur, now first of all who is the man—if it is not asking too much?'

'It is I.'

'You?'

'I!'

'Ugh!'

'Well, sir, what is to be done?'

'Can you pay me?'

'That I can; but you must give me time.'

'If you will give me security, not else.'

'And I will. What security will you have?'

'The notary answered this question by action. He put his hand in his pocket and drew out a parchment.

The farmer's eye dilated.

'This is a bond by which you give me a hold upon your Beaurepaire loan.'

'Not an assignment?' gasped Bonard.

'Not an assignment. On the contrary a bond that prevents your either assigning or selling your

loan, or forcing Beaurepaire to a sale—penalty, twenty thousand francs in either case.'

The farmer groaned.

'Call a witness, and sign.'

Bonard went to the window, opened it, and called to a man in the farmyard—'Here, Georges, step this way.'

As he turned round from the window the first thing he saw was the notary pulling another document out of his other pocket. Paper this time instead of parchment.

'Not another!! saints of paradise, not another!!!' yelled the farmer.

'This is to settle the interest—nothing more.'

'What interest? Ours? Why the interest is settled—it is three per cent.'

'Was! but I am not so soft as to lend money at three per cent.—Are you? You bleed the baroness six per cent.'

'What has that to do with it? I take what I can get. But I can't *pay* six per cent.'

'You are not required. I am not an usurer. I lend at five per cent. what little I lend at all, and I'll trouble you for your signature.'

'No! no!' cried the farmer, standing at bay, 'you can't do that. Three per cent. is the terms of the loan. Hang it man, stand to your own bargain!'

The notary started up like jack in the box, with startling suddenness and energy.

'Pay me my twelve thousand francs!' cried he

fiercely, 'or I empty your barns and gut your house before you can turn round. You can't sell Beaurepaire in less than a month, but I'll sell you up in forty-eight hours.'

'Sit ye down sir! for Heaven's sake sit ye down my good monsieur, and don't talk like that—don't quarrel with an honest man for a thoughtless word. Ah! here is Georges. Step in Georges, and see me sign my soul and entrails away at a sitting—ugh!'

Five minutes more, the harsh creditor, the parish bully, was obsequiously holding the notary's off stirrup. He mounted the squab dun and cantered off with the parchment sword and the paper javelin in the same pocket now—and tacked together by a pin.

Now you see why the notary said 'Curious' when five days after this he read the doctor's invitation to Beaurepaire.

CHAPTER V.

It was an autumn day refreshing to late turnips, but chilling and depressing to human hearts, and death to those of artists. A steady, even, down pour of rain, with gusts of wind that sent showers of leaves whirling from the orange-coloured trees.

Black double-banked clouds promised twenty-four hours moist misery; and as for the sun, hang me if you could guess on which side of the house he was, except by looking first at a clock then at an almanack. Even the sorrows and cares of the decaying house of Beaurepaire grew darker and heavier this day. Even Laure, the gayest, brightest, and most hopeful of the party, sat at the window, her face against the pane, and felt lead at her young heart. While she sat thus, sad and hopeless, instinctively reading the future lot of those she loved in those double-banked clouds, her eye was suddenly attracted by a singular phenomenon. A man of gigantic height and size glided along the public road, one half his huge form visible above the high palings. He turned in at the great gate of Beaurepaire, and lo the giant was but

a rider with a veiled steed. He seemed an enormous horseman's cloak—a pyramid of brown cloth with a hat on its apex, and a pony's nose protruding at one base, tail at the other. Rider's face did not show, being at the top of the cone but inside it.

At the sight of this pageant Laure could hardly suppress a scream of joy. Knight returning from Crusades was never more welcome than was this triangle of broad-cloth.

She beckoned secretly to St. Aubin. He came, and at the sight went hastily down and ordered a huge wood fire in the dining-room, now little used. He then met the notary at the hall door, and courteously invited him in.

'But stay!—your pony—what shall we do with him?'

'Give yourself no trouble on his account monsieur; he will not stir from the door; he is Fidelity in person.'

St. Aubin apologized for not taking his visitor up to the baroness; 'but the business is one that must be kept from her knowledge.' At this moment the door opened, and Josephine glided in: 'but here,' said he, 'is Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire come to bid you welcome to a house from which you have been too long absent. Mademoiselle, now that you have welcomed our truant friend, be so good as to describe to him the report which I only know from you.'

Josephine briefly told what she had heard from

Jacintha, that there was one cruel creditor wh
threatened to sell the chateau and lands of Bea
repaire.

'Mademoiselle,' said the notary gravely, 'th
report is true. He openly bragged of his intentio
more than a week ago.'

'Ah! we live so secluded—you hear ever
thing before us. Well Monsieur Perrin, tin
was you took an interest in the fortunes of th
family—'

'Never more than at the present moment, mo
sieur;' in saying this he looked at Josephine.

'The more to your credit monsieur.'

'Do you happen to know what is the sum due
this creditor?'

'I do. Six thousand francs.'

St. Aubin looked at Josephine triumphantly.

'One of the very smallest creditors then.'

'The smallest of them all,' replied the notary.

Another triumphant glance from St. Aubin.

'For all that,' said Monsieur Perrin thoug
fully, 'I wish it had been a larger creditor, and
less unmanageable man. The other creditors cou
be influenced by reason, by clemency, by go
feeling, but this is a man of iron; humph!—may
advise?'

'It will be received as a favour.'

'Then—pay this man off at once—have nothi
more to do with him.' His hearers opened the
eyes.

'Where are we to find six thousand francs?'

The notary reflected. 'I have not at this moment six thousand francs, but I could contribute two thousand of the six.'

'We thank you sincerely, but—'

'There then; I must contrive three thousand.'

St. Aubin shook his head, 'We cannot find three thousand francs.'

'Then we must prevail on Bonard to move no further for a time; and in the interval we must find another lender, and transfer the loan.'

'Ah! my good Monsieur Perrin, can you do this for us?'

'I can try; and you know zeal goes a good way in business. I will be frank with you; the character of this creditor gives me some uneasiness; but courage! all these fellows have secret histories, secret wishes, secret interest, that we notaries can penetrate—when we have a sufficient motive to penetrate such rubbish—but as it is not a matter to be trifled with, forgive me if I bid you and Mademoiselle an unceremonious adieu.' He rose with zeal depicted on his face.

'Such a day for you to be out on our service,' cried Josephine, putting up both her hands the palms outward, as if disclaiming the weather.

'If it rained hailed and snowed, I should not feel them in your cause mademoiselle,' cried the chivalrous notary; and he took by surprise one of Josephine's white hands, and kissed it with the deepest respect; then made off all in a bustle. St. Aubin followed him to the door, and lo!

'Fidelity in person' was gone. St. Aubin was concerned.

The notary was a little surprised, but he gave a shrill whistle, and awaited the result—another; and this time a long tail came slowly out of the Beaurepaire oak; the pony's quarters followed; but when his withers were just clear, the cold rain and wind struck on his loins, and the quadruped's bones went slowly in again. The tail had the grace to stay out; but hair is a vegetable, and vegetables like rain. The notary strode to the tree, and went in and backed 'demifidelity in person' out. The pyramid of cloth remounted him, and away they toddled; Laure, in spite of her anxiety, giggling against the window; for why, the fore-shortened animal's fore legs being hidden by the ample folds, the little cream-coloured hind legs seemed the notary's own.

Meantime St. Aubin was in earnest talk with Josephine in the hall. 'Well! that looks like sincerity!'

'Yes! you did not see the signal I made you.'

'No! what signal? why?'

'His eye was upon you like a hawk's when he proposed to you to pay three thousand francs out of the six thousand. Doctor, he was fathoming our resources; I wanted you not to lay bare the extent of our poverty and helplessness—oh that eye. He only said it to draw you out.'

'If you thought so why did you not stop me?'

'I did all I could to. I made you a sign twice.'

'Not that I observed.'

'Ah! if it had been Laure, she would have understood it directly.'

'Josephine, be candid: what sinister motive can this poor man have?'

'Indeed I don't know. Forgive me my uncharitable instinct, and let us admire your reasonable sagacity. It *was* our smallest creditor! Laure shall ask your pardon; dear friend, she will not leave our mother alone: be so kind as to go into the saloon; then Laure will come out to me.'

The doctor did as he was bid; and sure enough, her mother having now a companion, Laure whipped out and ran post-haste to her sister for the news. Thus a secret entered the House of Beaurepaire; a secret from which one person, the mistress of the house, was excluded.

Theirs' was no vulgar secrecy—no disloyal, nor selfish, nor even doubtful motive mingled with it. Circumstances appeared to dictate this course to tender and vigilant affection. They saw and obeyed. They put up the shutters—not to keep out the light from some action that would not bear the light—but to keep the wind of passing trouble from visiting the aged cheek they loved, and revered, and guarded.

In three days the notary called again. The poor soul seemed a little downcast. He said he had been to Bonard and made no impression on him; and to tell the truth had been insulted by him, or next door to it. On this they were greatly dispirited.

Maître Perrin recovered first. He brightened up all in a moment. 'I have an idea,' said he; 'we shall succeed yet; ay, and perhaps put *all* the liabilities on a more moderate scale of interest; meantime—' and here he hesitated. 'I wish you would let an old friend be your banker and advance you any small sums you may need for present comforts or conveniences.' Laure's eyes thanked him; but Josephine, a little to her surprise, put in a hasty and firm though polite negative.

The notary apologized for his officiousness, and said,

'I do not press this trifling offer of service; but pray consider it a permanent offer which at any time you can honour me by accepting.' He addressed this to Josephine with the air of a subject offering one little acorn back out of all 'the woods and forests' to his sovereign.

While the open friend of Beaurepaire was thus exhibiting his zeal, its clandestine friend was making a chilling discovery youth and romance have to make on their road to old age and caution, namely, how much easier it is to form many plans than to carry out one. This boiling young heart had been about to do wonders for her he adored, and for those who were a part of her. He had been going to interest the Government in their misfortunes—but how? Oh 'some way or other.' Looked at closer 'some way' had proved impracticable, and 'the other' unprecedented, *i. e.*, impossible.

He had not been a mere dreamer in her cause either. He had examined the whole estate of Beaurepaire, and had scientifically surveyed on one government pretence or another two or three of the farms. He had discovered that all the farms were underlet; that there were no leases; so that an able and zealous agent could in a few months increase the baroness's income thirty per cent. But when he had got this valuable intelligence what the better were they or he? To show them that they were not so poor as they in their aristocratical incapacity for business thought themselves, he must first win their ear: and how could he do this? If he were to call at Beaurepaire, word would come down again 'not at home to strangers until the Bourbons come back.' If he wrote, the answer would be 'Monsieur, I understand absolutely nothing of business. Be kind enough to make your communication to our man of business'—who must be either incapable or dishonest, argued young Riviere, or their affairs would not be thus vilely neglected; ten to one he receives a secret commission from the farmers to keep the rents low; so no good could come of applying to him—and here stepped in a little bit of self—for there are no angels upon earth except in a bad novel, and the poor boy was not writing a bad novel, but acting his little part in the real world. 'No!' said he, '*I* have found this out: perhaps she will never love me, but at least I will have her thanks and the pride and glory of having done her and

them a great service : no undeserving person shall rob me of this, nor even share it with me.' And here came the heart-breaking thing. The prospect of a formal acquaintance receded instead of advancing.

First, his own heart interposed a fresh obstacle : the deeper he fell in love the more his assurance dwindled, and since he found out they were so very poor he was more timid still, and they seemed to him more sacred and inaccessible, for he felt in his own soul how proud and distant he should be if he was a pauper.

The next calamity was, the young ladies never came out now. Strange to say he had no sooner confided his love and his hopes to Jacintha than she he loved kept the house with cruel pertinacity. 'Had Jacintha been so mad as to go and prattle in spite of her promise ? had the young lady's delicacy been alarmed ? was she imprisoning herself to avoid meeting one whose admiration annoyed her.'

A cold perspiration broke over him, whenever his perplexed mind came round to this thought.

Now the poor cannot afford to lose what the rich can fling away.

The sight of that sweet face for a moment thrice a week was not much—ah ! but it was, for it was all—his one bit of joy, and comfort and sunshine and hope—and it was gone now. The loss of it kept him at fever heat every day of his life, for an hour or two before their usual time of coming out and an hour or two after it, and chill at heart

the rest of the day: and he lost his colour and his appetite, and fretted and pined for this one look three times a week. And she who could have healed this wound with a glance of her violet eye and a smile once or twice a week: she who without committing herself or caring a straw for him, could have brought the colour back to this young cheek and the warmth to this chilled heart by just shining out of doors now and then instead of in, sat at home with unparalelled barbarity and perseverance.

At last he lost all patience. 'I must see Jacintha,' said he, 'and if she really imprisons herself to avoid me, I will leave the country—I will go into the army—it is very hard she should be robbed of her health and her walk because I love her:' and with this generous resolution the poor little fellow felt something rise in his throat and nearly choke him. Forgive him ladies: though a statesman, he was but a boy—boys will cry after women as children for toys. You may have observed this!

He walked hurredly up to Beaurepaire, asking himself how he should contrive an interview with Jacintha.

On his arrival there, casting his eyes over the palings, what did he see but the two young ladies walking in the park at a considerable distance from the house! His heart gave a leap at the sight of them. Then he had a sudden inspiration. The park was not strictly private, at least since the Revolution. Still it was so far private that re-

spectable people did not make a practice of crossing it. 'I will seem to met them unexpectedly,' thought young Riviere, 'and if she smiles, I will apologize for crossing the park—then I shall have spoken to her. I shall have broken the ice.'

He met them. They looked so loftily sad he had not the courage to address them. He bowed respectfully, they curtseyed, and he passed on cursing his cowardice.

'I *must* see Jacintha.' He made a long detour; his object being to get where he could be seen from the kitchen.

Meantime the following short dialogue passed between the sisters:—

Laure.—'Why he has lost his colour! What a pity!'

'Who, dear?'

'That young gentleman who passed us just now. I think he has been ill. I am so sorry.'

'Who is he?'

'I don't know who he is; I know what he is, though.'

'And what is he?'

'He is very handsome; and he passes us oftener than seems to me quite natural; and now I think of it,' said Laure, opening her eyes ludicrously, 'I have a sister who is a beautiful woman; and now I think of it again,'—opening her eyes still wider—'if I do not lock her up, I shall perhaps have a rival in her affections.'

'Child! Moreover he seemed to me a mere

boy.' Laure gave a toss of her head, and a suspicious look at Josephine. 'Oh, mademoiselle, there are forward boys as well as backward ones. But I shall have an eye on you both.'

Josephine smiled very faintly; amidst so many cares she was hardly equal to what she took for granted was a pure jest of Laure's, and their conversation returned to its usual channels. Edouard got round to the other side of the chateau, and strolled about outside the palings some thirty yards from the kitchen-door; and there he walked slowly about, hoping every moment to see the kitchen-door open and Jacintha come out. He was disappointed; and after hanging about nearly an hour, was going away in despair, when a window at the top of the house suddenly opened, and Jacintha made him a rapid signal with her hand to go nearer the public road. He obeyed; and then she kept him waiting till his second stock of patience was nearly exhausted; but at last he heard a rustle, and there was her comely face set between two young acacias. He ran to her. She received him with a rebuke. 'Is that the way to do?—prowling in sight like a house-breaker.'

'Did any one see me?'

'Yes! Mademoiselle Laure did; and what is more, she spoke to me, and asked me who you were. Of course, I said I didn't know.'

'Oh! did you?'

'Then she asked me if it was not the young monsieur who sent them the game. Oh! I forgot,

I ought to have told you that first. When they asked me about the game, I said "it is a young sportsman that takes Dard out; so he shot some on the baroness's land." I was obliged to say that, you know.'

'Well, but you spoke the truth.'

'You don't mean that!—that is odd. "And so he gave some of it to Dard for the house," said I. But the next time you want me don't stand sentinel for all the world to see; make me a signal and then slip in here, and I will join you.'

'A signal?'

Jacintha put her hand under her apron and pulled out a dish-cloth.

'Hang this on that tree out there; then I shall see it from the kitchen window; so then I shall know something is up. Apropos, what is up now?'

'I am very unhappy!—that is up.'

'Oh! you must expect the cold fit as well as the hot fit, if you will fall in love,' observed Jacintha, with a cool smile. 'Why didn't you come to me before, and be cheered up?'

'Dear Jacintha, she never comes out now. What is to become of me if I am to lose the very sight of her? Surely, you have not been so indiscreet as to tell them—'

'There is a question. Do you see green in my eye, young man?'

'Then what is the reason?—there must be some reason. They used to walk out; pray, pray, tell me the reason.'

Jacintha's merry countenance fell. 'My poor lad,' said she kindly, 'don't torment yourself, or fancy I have been such an ill friend to you, or such a novice, as to put them on their guard against you. No; it is the old story—want of money.'

'That keeps them in doors? How can that be?'

'Well now,' said Jacintha, 'it is just as well you have come to-day, for if you had come this time yesterday I could not have told you, but I overheard them yesternight. My son, it is for want of clothes.' Riviere looked aghast at her.

'Don't!' cried the faithful servant—'don't look at me so, or I shall give way, I know I shall; nor don't mistake me either—they have plenty of coloured dresses; old ones, but very good ones; but it is their black dresses that are worn shabby; and they can't afford to buy new; and all the old dresses are coloured, and it goes against their hearts to go flaunting it. They were crying last night to think they could not afford even to mourn for their father, but must come out in colours, for want of a little money.'

'Jacintha, they will break my heart.'

'So it seems they have settled not to go out of the grounds at all. Thus they meet nobody; so now they can wear their mourning till it is quite threadbare. Ah, my son, how different from most women, that can't forget the dead too quick, and come flaring out again! And to-morrow is her birthday. I mind the time there was one beautiful new gown sure to be laid out on her bed that

day, if not two. Times are sadly changed with us, monsieur.'

'To-morrow is her birthday?'

'Yes!'

'Good-bye, Jacintha—my heart is full. There! good bye, loyal heart,' and he kissed her hastily, with trembling lips.

'Poor boy!—DON'T LOSE MY DISH-CLOUT, WHATEVER YOU DO!'

She uttered this caution with extreme anxiety, and at the top of her voice, as he was running off in a strange flutter.

The next day the notary bustled in with a cheerful air. He had not a moment to stay, but just dropped in to say that he thought matters were going well, and that he should be able to muzzle Bonard.

After this short interview, which was with the young ladies only, for the doctor was out, away bustled Perrin.

It was about an hour after this—Josephine was reading to the baroness, and Laure and she were working—when in came Jacintha, and made a curtsey. 'The tree is come, my ladies.' 'What tree?' inquired the baroness.

'For Mademoiselle to plant, according to custom. It is her birthday. Dard has brought it; it is an acacia this time.' 'The faithful creature,' cried the baroness. 'She has thought of this—and we forgot it. There, bring me my shawl and hood. I will not be absent from the ceremony.'

'But, dear mamma,' put in Josephine, 'had not you better look at us from the window; there is such a cold air out to-day.'

'It is not cold enough to chill a mother's love. My first-born! I see her in her cradle now. Sweet little cherub.'

In a few minutes they were all out in the garden.

Josephine was to decide where she would plant her tree.

'Only remember, Mademoiselle,' said Jacintha, 'it will not always be little like it is now. You must not put it where it will be choked up when it is a big tree.' 'Oh no, Jacintha,' said Laure, 'we will plant it to the best advantage.'

Then one advised Josephine to plant it on the south terrace; another preferred the turf oval between the great gate and the north side of the chateau. When they had said their say, to their surprise Josephine said rather timidly, 'I should like to plant it in the Pleasance.'

'In the Pleasance! Why, Josephine?'

'It will take some time to plant.'

'But it will take no more time to plant it where it will show than in the Pleasance,' said Laure, half angrily.

'But Laure, the Pleasance is sheltered from the wind.'

Dard snorted.

'It is sheltered to-day because the chateau happens to be between the wind and it. But the

wind will not be always in that quarter; and the Pleasance is open to more winds than any other part, if you go to that.'

'Dear mamma, may I not plant it in the Pleasance?'

'Of course you may, my child.'

'And who told you to put in your word! You are to take up your spade and dig the hole where Mademoiselle bids,—that is what you are here for, not to argufy.'

'Laure, I admire the energy of that girl's character,' remarked Josephine languidly, as they all made for the Pleasance. 'Where will you have it?' asked Dard roughly.

'Here, I think, Dard,' said Josephine sweetly.

Dard grinned malignantly, and drove in his spade. 'It will never be much bigger than a stinging nettle,' thought he, 'for the roots of the oak have sucked every atom of heart out of this;' his black soul exulted secretly.

They watched his work. 'You are not cold, mamma?' asked Josephine anxiously.

'No! no!' said the baroness. 'There is no wind on this side of the house. Ah! now I see, my Josephine. I have a very good daughter—who will never shine in horticulture.'

Jacintha stood by Dard, inspecting his work; the three ladies stood together watching him at the distance of a few feet; on their right, but a little behind them, was the great oak. Close behind them was a lemon tree and its mould in

an immense tub; the tub was rotting at the sides. Over the mould was a little moss here and there.

Now, at the beginning of this business, the excitement of the discussion, and choosing the spot, and setting Dard to work, had animated the baroness as well as her daughter. But now, for some time Dard had all the excitement to himself. They had only to look on and think while he wrought.

'Oh dear,' cried Laure suddenly, 'mamma is crying. Josephine, our mother is crying!'

'Ah!' cried Josephine, 'I feared this. I did not want her to come out. Oh, my mother!'

'My children,' sobbed the baroness, 'it is very natural. I cannot but remember how often we have planted a tree and kept the poor child's birthday—not as now. Those were on earth then that have left us, and gone to God. Many friends stood around us—how warm their hands—how friendly their voices—how truthful their eyes! Yet they have abandoned us. Adversity has shaken them off as the frost is even now stripping off your leaves, old friend. These tears are not for me! oh, no! thanks to God and the Virgin, I know whither I am going, and whom I shall meet again, I care not how soon: but it is to think I must leave my darlings behind me without a friend, my tender lambs in a world of foxes and wolves without a friend!'

'Mother, we have friends! We have the dear doctor.'

'A *savant*, a creature more a woman than a woman; you will have to take care of him, not he of you.'

'We have our own love; did ever a sister love another as I love Josephine?'

'No!' said Josephine. 'Yes! I love you as much.'

'As to that, yes, you will fall in one another's arms,' said the baroness—'ah! I do ill to weep this day; my children, suffer me to compose myself,' and the baroness turned round, and applied her handkerchief to her eyes. Her daughters withdrew a step or two in the opposite direction; for in those days parents, even the most affectionate, maintained a marked superiority, and the above was a hint their mother would be alone a moment.

They waited respectfully for her orders to rejoin her. The order came in a tone that surprised them.

'My children, come here—both of you.'

They found the baroness poking among the moss with the point of her ebony crutch.

'This is a purse, and it is not yours, Laure, nor yours, is it?'

The two girls looked, and sure enough, there lay among the green moss in the tub—a green silk purse. They eyed it like startled deer a moment, and then Laure pounced on it and took it up. 'Oh! how heavy.' Jacintha and Dard came running up; Laure poured the contents into her hand, ten gold pieces of twenty francs each: new

shining gold pieces. Jacintha gave a scream of joy, a sort of victorious war whoop.

'Luck is turned,' cried she with joyful superstition. Laure stood with the gold pieces glittering in her pink white palm and her face blushing all over and beaming; and her eyes glittering with excitement and pleasure. Their amazement was great. 'And here is a paper,' cried Josephine eagerly, bending over the moss and taking up a small piece of paper folded; she opened it rapidly, and showed it them all; it contained these words, in a copperplate hand—

'*From a friend—in part payment of a great debt.*'

And now all of a sudden Josephine began to blush; and gradually not only her face but her neck blushed all over, and even her white forehead glowed like a rose.

'Who could it be?' echoed on all sides.

The baroness solved it for them—'it is St. Aubin.'

'Oh! mamma! he has not ten gold pieces.'

'Who knows? he has perhaps found some bookseller who has bought his work on insects.'

'No, mamma,' said Laure; 'I cannot think this is our dear doctor's doing. It is odd, too, his being out of the way at this hour; I never knew him anywhere but at his books till two. Hush! hush!—here he comes; let us circumvent him on the spot—this is fun.'

'Give me the purse, and you Jacintha and Dard, recommence your work.'

When the Doctor came up, he found Dard at work, Jacintha standing by him, and the ladies entirely occupied in looking on. The baroness explained to him what was going on. He showed considerable interest in it.

Presently the baroness put her hand in her pocket, and gave her daughters a look; four eyes were instantly levelled at the doctor's face. Stand firm, Doctor; if there is a crevice in your coat of mail, those eyes will pierce it.

'By-the-by,' said the baroness, with perfect nonchalance, 'you have dropped your purse here; we have just picked it up;' and she handed it him.

'Thank you, madam,' said he, and he took it carelessly; 'this is not mine—it is too heavy—and now I think of it,' continued the savant with enviable simplicity, 'I have not carried a purse this twenty years. No! I put my silver in my right waistcoat pocket, and my gold in my left, that is, I should—but I never have any.'

'Doctor, on your honour, did you not leave this purse and this paper there?'

The doctor examined the paper. Meantime Laure explained to him what had occurred.

'Madam the baroness,' said he, 'I have been your friend and pensioner nearly twenty years; if by some strange chance money were to come into my hands, I should not play you a childish trick like this of which you seem to suspect me. I have the right to come to you, and say, 'My old

friend, here I bring you back a small part of all I owe you."'

'My friend! my friend! I was stupid; tell us then who is our secret friend? may heaven bless him!'

'Let us reflect,' said the doctor. 'Ah! to be sure. I would lay my life it is he!'

'Who?'

'A very honest man, whom you have treated harshly, madame; it is Perrin, the notary.'

It was the baroness's turn to be surprised.

'I may as well confess to you, madame, that I have lately had more than one interview with Perrin, and that although he is naturally hurt at the severity with which you treated him, his regard for you is undiminished.'

'I am as grateful as possible,' said the baroness with a fine and scarcely perceptible sneer. 'Laure,' said Josephine, 'it is curious, but Monsieur Perrin was here for a minute or two to-day; and really he did not seem to have anything particular to say.'

'There!' shouted the doctor—'there! he came to leave the purse. And in doing so he was only carrying out an intention he had already declared.'

'Indeed!' said the baroness.

'He offered to advance money in small sums; an offer that of course was declined. So he was driven to this manœuvre. There are honest hearts among the notaries.'

While the doctor was enforcing his views on the

baroness, Josephine and Laure slipped away round the house.

'Who is it?' said Laure.

'It is not the doctor; and it is not Monsieur Perrin.'

'Of course not, but who is it?'

'Laure, don't you think it is some one who has at all events delicate sentiments?'

'Clearly, and therefore not a notary.'

'Laure, dear. Might it not be some person who has done us some wrong, and is perhaps penitent?'

'Certainly. Such a person might make restitution—one of our tenants, or creditors, you mean, but then, the paper says "a friend." Stay, it says a debtor! Why a debtor? Down with enigmas!'

'Laure, dear, think of some one that might—'

'I can't. I am quite at a loss.'

'Since it is not the doctor, nor Monsieur Perrin, might it not be—for after all, he would naturally be ashamed to appear before me.'

'Before you?'

'Yes, Laure, is it quite certain that it might not be—'

'Who?' asked Laure nervously, catching a glimpse now.

'He who once pretended to love me!'

'Camille Dujardin?'

'It was not I who mentioned his name,' cried Josephine hastily. Laure turned pale. 'Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* She loves that man still.'

'No! no! no!'

'You love him just the same as ever. Oh, it is wonderful—it is terrible—the power this man has over you—over your judgment as well as your heart.'

'No! for I believe he has forgotten my very name; don't you think so?'

'Dear Josephine, can you doubt it?'

'Forgive me.'

'Come, you do doubt it.'

'I do.'

'Why? for what reason?'

'Because the words he said to me as we parted at that gate lie still at my heart: and oh, sister, the voice we love seems the voice of truth itself. He said "I am to join the army of the Pyrenees, so fatal to our troops; but say to me what you never yet have said, Camille, I love you—and I swear I will come back alive." So then I said to him, "I love you,"—and he never came back.'

'How could he come here? a deserter—a traitor!'

'It is not true! it is not in his nature; inconstancy may be. Tell me that he never really loved me and I will believe you; but not that he is a coward. Let me weep over my past love, not blush for it.'

'Past? You love him to-day as you did three years ago!'

'No! I tell you I do not. I love no one. I never shall love any one again.'

'But him. It is that love which turns your heart against others. You love him, dearest, or why should you fancy our secret benefactor could be Camille?'

'Why? because I was mad! because it is impossible; but I see my folly. Let us go in, my sister.'

'Go, love, I will follow you; but don't you care to know who *I* think left the purse for us?'

'No,' said Josephine sadly and doggedly; she added with cold nonchalance, 'I dare say time will show,' and she went slowly in, her hand to her head.

'Her birthday!' sighed Laure.

'I will see her tree planted,' thought Laure, 'for she has forgotten it, and everything, and everybody but that—'

And she ran off to join the group. Turning the corner rapidly, she found Jacintha suspiciously near: and, above all, walking away towards the tree: away from where?

Laure burned with anger, and, as she passed Jacintha, wheeled about, and gave her a look like red lightning. It came like a slap in the face. Jacintha, meantime, had got ready an amazing dogged, unconscious face—

And o'er the impassive ice the lightnings play.

This gallant and praiseworthy effort was but

partially successful. She could command her features, but not her blood: she felt it burn her cheek under the fire of Laure's eye. And in the evening, when Laure suddenly beckoned to her, and said in a significant way, 'I want to speak to you Jacintha,' the faithful domestic felt like giving way at the knees and sinking down flat; so she stood up like Notre Dame outwardly, and wore an expression of satisfaction and agreeable expectation on her impenetrable mug. Laure drove in an eye. 'Who put that purse there?'

'Mademoiselle Laure, I don't know—but I have my suspicions; and if mademoiselle will give me a few days, I think I can find out for sure.'

'How many days? for I am impatient.'

'Say a fortnight mademoiselle.'

'That is a long time; well, it is agreed.'

And so these two parted without a word openly uttered on either side about that which was uppermost in both their minds. 'Come,' thought Jacintha, 'I am well out of it: if I can find that out, she won't give it me for listening; and it is a fair bargain, especially for me, for I know who left the purse; but I wasn't going to tell her that all in a moment.'

Now Jacintha, begging her pardon, did not know; but she strongly suspected young Riviere of being the culprit who had invented this new sort of burglary—breaking into honest folk's premises in the dead of night, and robbing them of their poverty, instead of their wealth, like the

good old-fashioned burglars. She waited quietly, expecting every day to see her dish-cloth waving from the tree at the back, and to hear him tell her of his own accord how cleverly he had done the trick.

Day after day passed away, and no dish-cloth. The fortnight was melting, and Jacintha's patience. She resolved: and one morning she cut two bunches of grapes, and pulled some nectarines, put them in a basket, covered them with a napkin, and called on M. Edouard Riviere at his lodging. She was ushered into that awful presence, and, so long as the servant was in hearing, all her talk was about the fruit she had brought him in return for his game. The servant being gone, she dropped the mask. 'Well it is all right!' said she, smiling and winking.

'What is all right?'

'They have got the purse!'

'Have they! What purse? I don't know what you allude to.'

'No, of course not, Mr. Innocence: you did not leave a purse full of gold up at Beaurepaire!!!!'

'Well, I never said I did: purses full of gold are luxuries with which I am little acquainted.'

'Very well,' said Jacintha biting her lip; 'then you and I are friends no longer, that is all.'

'O! yes we are.'

'No! if you can't trust me, you are no friend of mine; ingrate! to try and deceive *me*. I know it was you.'

'Well, if you know, why ask me?' retorted Edouard sharply. 'Better snap my nose off, had you not?' said Jacintha reproachfully. 'Confess it is odd your not showing more curiosity about it. Looks as if you knew all about it, eh?'

'But I *am* curious, and I wish to Heaven you would tell me what it is all about, instead of taking it into your head that I know already.'

'Well I will.'

So Jacintha told him all about the baroness finding the purse: and on whom their suspicions had fallen.

'I wish it had been *I*,' said Edouard; 'but tell me dear, has it been of service, has it contributed to their comfort? that is the principal thing—not who gave it.'

On this Jacintha reflected, and fixing her grey eye on him she said—'Unluckily there were just two pieces too few.'

'What a pity.'

'No one of my ladies ever buys a new dress without the others having one too; now they found it would take two more gold pieces to give my three ladies a new suit of mourning each. So the money is put by till they can muster the other two.' 'What then,' cried Edouard, 'I must not hope to see them out again any the more for this money?'

'No! you see it was not quite enough.'

Riviere's countenance fell.

'Well,' said Jacintha, assuming a candid tone,

'I see it was not you, but really at first I suspected you.'

'It is nothing to be ashamed of if I had done it.'

'No! indeed. How foolish to suspect you, was it not? You shall have the grapes all the same.'

'Thank you; they come from Beaurepaire?'

'Yes. Good-bye. Don't be sad. They will come out again as soon as they can afford the mourning:' she added, with sudden warmth—'you have not lost my clout?'

'No! no!'

'You had better give it me back: then my mind will be at ease.'

'No, excuse me; it is my only way of getting a word with you.'

'Why, you have never used it.'

'But I may want to any day.'

Jacintha, as she went home with her empty basket, knitted her black brows, and recalled the scene, and argued the matter *pro* and *con*.

'I don't know why he should face it out like that with me if it was he. Ah! but he would have been jealous, and a deal more inquisitive if it was not he. Well, any way I have put him off his guard, and won't I watch him! If it is he, I'll teach him to try and draw the wool over Jacintha's eyes, and she his friend—the monster.'

Fortune co-operated with these malignant views. This very evening Dard declared himself—that is, after proposing by implication and probable infer-

ence for the last seven years, he made a direct offer of his hand and digestive organs.

Now this gave Jacintha great pleasure. She could have kissed the little fellow on the spot.

So she said in an off-hand way 'Well Dard, if I were to take any one, it should be you: but I have pretty well made up my mind not to marry at all: at all events till my mistress can spare me.

'Gammon!' shouted Dard, 'that is what they all say.'

'Well, what everybody says must be true,' said Jacintha equivocating unworthily. 'Not unless they stick to it,' objected Dard. 'And that is a song they all drop at the church door, when they do get a chance.' 'Well, I am not in such a hurry as to snap at such a small chance,' retorted Jacintha, with a toss of her head.

So then the polite swain had to mollify her.

'Well, Dard,' said she, 'one good turn deserves another: if I am to marry you what will you do for me?'

Dard gave a glowing description of what he would do for her as soon as she was his wife. She let him know that was not the point: what would he do for her *first*. He would do anything—everything.

> ——We do know
> When the blood burns how prodigal the heart
> Lends the tongue vows.—HAMLET.

This brought the contracting parties to an understanding.

First, under a vow of secresy, she told him young Riviere was in love with Josephine, and she was his confidante; then how the youth had affronted her by attempting to deceive her about the purse; and, finally, Dard must watch his movements by night and day, that between them they might catch him out.

Dard made a wry face—*dolus latet in generalibus* —[free translation—'anything means nothing;'] when he vowed to do anything, everything, what not, and such small phrases, he never intended to do anything in particular: but he was in for it; and sentinel and spy were added to his little odd jobs. For the latter office his apparent stolidity qualified him, and so did his petty but real astuteness; moreover, he was daily primed by Jacintha —a good soul, but no Nicodema. Meantime St. Aubin upheld Perrin as the secret benefactor, and bade them all observe that since that day the notary had never been to the chateau.

The donor, whoever he was, little knew the pain he was inflicting on this distressed but proud family, or the hard battle that ensued between their necessities and their delicacy!! The ten gold pieces were a perpetual temptation: a daily conflict. The words that accompanied the donation offered a bait. Their pride and dignity declined it; but these bright bits of gold cost them many a sharp pang.

Jacintha deceived Riviere: a mere portion of the two hundred francs would have enabled the

poor girls to keep up appearances with the outside world, and yet to mourn their father openly. And it went through and through those tender, simple hearts, to think that they must be disunited—even in so small a thing as dress; that while their mother remained in her weeds, they must seem no longer to share her woe.

The baroness knew their feeling, and felt its piety, and yet must not say—'take five of these bits of gold, and let us all look what we are—one.' Yet in this, as in everything else, they came to be all of one mind. They resisted, they struggled, and with a wrench they conquered day by day. At last, by general consent, they locked up the tempter, and looked at it no more. But the little bit of paper met a kinder fate. Laure made a little frame for it, and it was kept in a drawer in the *salon:* and often looked at and blessed. Their mother had despaired of human friendship, and with despondency on her lips she had found this paper with the sacred word 'friend' written on it: it fell all in a moment on their aching hearts.

They could not tell whence it came—this blessed word.

But who can tell whence comes the dew?

Science is in two minds about that.

Then let me go with the Poets; who say it comes from Heaven.

And even so that sweet word Friend dropped like the dew from Heaven on these afflicted ones.

So they locked the potent gold away from them-

selves, and took the kind slip of paper to their hearts. *Aristo va!*

The fortnight elapsed and Jacintha was no wiser. She had to beg a respite. Laure conceded it with an austere brow, smiling inwardly.

Meantime Dard, Jacintha's little odd sentinel, spy, gardener, lover, and all that, wormed himself with rustic cunning into the statesboy's confidence.

Treachery met its retribution. The statesboy made him his factotum—*i. e.* yet another set of little odd jobs fell on him. He had always been struck by their natural variety: but now what with Jacintha's and what with Riviere's they seemed infinite. At one hour he would be holding a long chain while Riviere measured the lands of Beaurepaire: at another he would be set to pump a farmer. Then it would be 'back Dard!' this meant he was to stand in a crescent while Edouard wrote a long calculation or made a sketch upon him, compendious writing desk.

Then luxury of luxuries, he the laziest of the human race, though through the malice of fate the hardest worked, had to call citizen Riviere in the morning!

At night after all his toil he could count upon the refreshment of being scolded by Jacintha because he brought home the wrong sort of information, and had not the talent to coin the right. He did please her twice though: the first time was when he told her they were measuring the lands of Beaurepaire: and again when he found out the

young citizen's salary, four hundred francs on the 1st of every month.

'That brat to have four hundred francs a month!' cried Jacintha. 'Dard I will give you a good supper to-night.'

Dard believed in her affection for a moment, for with one of his kidney the proof of the pudding, &c.

'And whilst I am cooking it here is a little job for you—to fill up the time.'

'Ugh!'

Jacintha had blacked twenty yards of string, and cut down half a dozen bells that were never used now.

'You shall put them up again when times mend,' said she. All Dard had to do now was to draw a wide magic circle all around the lemon tree, and so fix the bells that they should be out of sight, and should ring if a foot came against the invisible string. This little odd job was from that night incorporated into Dard's daily existence. He had to set the trap and bells at dusk every evening, and from that moment till bed-time Jacintha went about her work with half her mind out of doors—half in, and her ear on full cock.

One day St. Aubin met the notary ambling. He stopped him, and holding up his finger said playfully—

'We have found you out.'

The notary turned pale.

'Oh!' said the doctor, 'this is pushing sensibility too far.'

The notary stammered.

'A good action done slily is none the less a good action.'

This explanation completed the notary's mystification.

'But you are a worthy man,' cried St. Aubin, warming.

The notary bowed.

'They cannot profit by your liberality, but they feel it deeply. And you will be rewarded in a better world. It is I who tell you so.'

The notary muttered indistinctly. He was a man of moderate desires; would have been quite content if there had been no other world in perspective. He had studied this, and made it pay—did not desire a better—sometimes feared a worse.

'Ah!' said Monsieur St. Aubin, 'I see how it is; we do not like to hear ourselves praised, do we? When shall we see you at the chateau?'

'As soon as I have good news to bring.' And Perrin, anxious to avoid such a shower of compliments, spurred the dun, and cantered away.

CHAPTER VI.

'MADEMOISELLE LAURE!'

'Who is that?'

'Me, mademoiselle?'

'And who is me?'

'Jacintha. Are you sleepy, mademoiselle?'

'Ah, yes!'

'Then don't!—you must rise directly.'

'Must I? Why? Ah! the chateau is on fire!'

'No! no!—great news. I may be mistaken, but I don't think I am—I am sure not, however.'

'The purse!—the purse!'

'No other thing. Listen, mademoiselle. Dard has watched a certain person this month past, by my orders. Well, mademoiselle, last night he got his pay—four hundred francs—and what do you think, he told Dard he must be called an hour before daybreak. Something *must be* up—something *is* up!'

'That thing is me!' cried Laure. 'Behold, I am up! You good girl, when did you know all this?'

'Only since last night.'

'Why didn't you tell me last night, then?'

'I had more sense. You would not have slept

a wink. I haven't. Mademoiselle, there is no time to spare; why, the sun will be up in a few minutes. How quick could you dress to save your life?' asked Jacintha, a little fretfully; 'in half an hour?'

'In half a minute,' cried Laure; 'fly and get Josephine up; there will be the struggle!'

Laure dressed herself furiously, and glided to Josephine's room. She found her languidly arranging herself in the usual style.

Laure flew at her like a tiger-cat, pinned her and hooked her, and twisted her about at a rare rate.

Josephine smiled and yawned.

While the sprightly Hebe was thus expediting the languid Venus, a bustle of feet was heard overhead, and down came Jacintha red as fire.

'Oh, mesdemoiselles! I have been on the leads. There is somebody coming from the village—I spied from behind the chimney. There is not a moment to lose—the sun is up, too.'

'But I am not dressed.'

'Then you must come undressed,' said Jacintha, brusquely.

'I feel as if I *should* come undressed,' answered Josephine, quietly. 'You have not half fastened me. There, don't let me detain you—go without me.'

'Hear to that!' remonstrated Jacintha; 'and it is for her the man does it all.'

'For her!'

'For me?'

'Yes! mademoiselle, for you. Is that wonderful? You look at yourself in the glass, and that will explain all. No, don't, or we *shall* be too late. Now, ladies, come to your hiding place.'

'What! are we to hide?'

'Why, you don't think he will do it, if he sees you, mademoiselle. Besides, how are you to catch him unless I put you in ambush?'

'Oh, you good girl,' cried Laure. 'Here, then, is one that originates ideas—this is fun.'

'I would rather dispense with that part of her idea,' said Josephine. 'What can I say to one I do not know, even if I catch him—which I hope I shall not?'

'Oh, we have not caught him yet,' said Jacintha; and if you do, it won't be "I," it will be "we.' You will be as bold as lions when you find yourselves two to one, and on your own ground. One and one make fifteen!'

'One and one make fifteen? Laure, you are dressed, demand an explanation—and lend me a pin.'

'I mean one young lady alongside another young lady has the courage of fifteen separate.'

Jacintha now took the conduct of the expedition. She led her young mistresses on tiptoe to the great oak tree. 'In with you, my ladies, and as still as mice.'

They cast a comic look at one another, and obeyed the general.

'Now,' said Jacintha, 'if it is all right, I shan't stir—if it is all wrong, I shall come and tell you. Mother of Heaven, there is your blind up—if he sees that, he will know you are up. I fly to draw it down—adieu, mesdemoiselles.'

'She is not coming back, Josephine?'

'No, Laure.'

'Then my heart beats, that is all. Also, imagine us popping out on a stranger!'

'Such a phrase, sister!'

'It popped out, sister!'

'Before we even think of anything else, be so kind as to fasten one or two of these hooks properly; should we really decide to charge the foe, it would be well to have as little disorder in our own lines as possible,' and Josephine's lip made a little curl that was inestimably beautiful. Laure obeyed. During the process, Josephine delivered herself, in a faint sort of way, of what follows. 'See nevertheless, how hard it is for our sex to resist energy. Jacintha is our servant; but she has energy and decision; this young woman, my supposed inferior, willed that I should be in an absurd position; what is the consequence? A minute ago I was in bed—now I am here—and the intervening events are a blank'—(a little yawn).

'Josephine,' said Laure gravely, 'such small talk is too fearful in this moment of horrible agitation. A sudden thought! How come you to be so frightfully calm and composed, you, the greater poltroon of the two by ever so much.'

'By a hair's breadth, for instance.'

'I see—you have decided not to move from this ambush, come what may. Double coward and traitress, that is why you are cool. I flutter because at bottom I am brave, because I mean to descend like an eagle on him—and fall dead with fright at his feet.'

'Be tranquil—nobody is coming—be reasonable. What ground have we for supposing any one will come here this morning.'

'Josephine,' cried Laure eagerly, 'that girl knows more than she has told us; she is in earnest. Depend upon it, as she says, there is something up. Kiss me, dear, that will give you courage—oh! how my heart beats, and remember "one and one make—" how many?'

'How many figures do one cypher added to anoth—hush! hush!' cried Josephine, in a loud, agitated whisper, and held up a quivering hand, and her bosom began to heave; she pointed several times in rapid succession westward through the tree. In a moment Laure had her eye glued to a little hole in the tree. Josephine had instinctively drawn dack from a much larger aperture, through which she feared she could be seen.

'Yes,' said Laure, in a trembling whisper.

A figure stood in the park, looking over the little gate into the Pleasance.

Josephine kept away from the larger aperture through which she had caught a glimpse of him. Laure kept looking through the little hole, and

back at Josephine, alternately; the figure never moved.

The suspense lasted several minutes.

Presently, Laure made a sudden movement, and withdrew from her peep-hole; and at the same moment Josephine could just hear the gate open.

The girls came together by one instinct in the centre of the tree, but did not dare to speak, scarce to breathe. After a while Laure ventured cautiously to her peep-hole again; but she recoiled as if shot; he was walking straight for the oak tree. She made a terrified signal to Josephine accordingly. He passed slowly out of sight, and the next time she peeped she could no longer tell where he was. Then the cautious Josephine listened at the side of the east fissure, and Laure pried through the little hole in case he should come into sight again. While thus employed, she felt a violent pinch, and Josephine had seized her by the shoulder and was dragging her into one corner at the side of the east fissure. They were in the very act of crouching and flattening each into her own corner, when a man's shadow came slap into the tree between them, and there remained. Each put a hand quick and hard against her mouth, or each would have screamed out when the shadow joined them, forerunner, no doubt, of the man himself.

They glared down at it, and crouched and trembled—they had not bargained for this; they had hidden to catch, not to be caught. At last

they recovered sufficient composure to observe that this shadow, one half of which lay on the ground, while the head and shoulders went a little way up the wall of the tree, represented a man's profile, not his front face. The figure, in short, was standing between them and the sun, and was contemplating the chateau, not the tree.

Still, when the shadow took off its hat to Josephine, she would have screamed if she had not bitten her plump hand instead.

It wiped its brow with a handkerchief; it had walked fast, poor thing! The next moment it was away. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

They looked at one another and panted. They dared not before. Then Laure, with one hand on her heaving bosom, shook her little white fist viciously at where the figure must be, and perhaps a comical desire of vengeance stimulated her curiosity. She now glided through the fissure like a cautious panther from her den; and noiseless and supple as a serpent began to wind slowly round the tree. She soon came to a great protuberance. Her bright eye peeped round it; her lithe body worked into the hollow, and was invisible to him she was watching. Josephine, a yard behind her, clung also to the oak, and waited with glowing eye and cheek for signals.

The cautious visitor had surveyed the ground, had strolled with mock carelessness round the oak, and was now safe at his goal. He was seen to put his hand in his pocket, to draw something out and

drop it under the lemon tree; this done, he was heard to vent a little innocent chuckle of intense satisfaction, but of brief duration; for the very moment she saw the purse leave his hand, Laure made a rapid signal to Josephine to wheel round the other side of the tree, and, starting together with admirable concert, both the daughters of Beaurepaire swooped on him from opposite sides.

His senses were too quick, and too much on the alert, not to hear the rustle the moment they started; but it was too late then. They did not walk up to him, or even run. They came so fast they must, I think, have fancied they were running away instead of charging.

He knew nothing about their past tremors. All he saw or heard was—a rustle, then a flap on each side, as of great wings, and two lovely women were upon him with angelic swiftness. 'Ah!' he cried out, with a start of terror, and glanced from the first comer, Laure, to the park. His instinctive idea was to run that way. But Josephine was on that side, caught the look, and put up her hand, as much as to say, 'You can't pass here.'

In such situations, the mind works quicker than lightning. He took off his hat, and stammered an excuse—'Come to look at the oak.' But Laure pounced on a purse, and held it up to Josephine. He was caught. His only chance now was to bolt for the great gate and run—but it was not the notary—it was a poor little fellow who lost

his presence of mind, or perhaps thought it rude to run when a lady told him to stand still. All he did was to crush his face into his two hands, round which his cheeks and neck now blushed red as blood. Blush? the young women could see the colour rush like a wave to the very roots of his hair and the tips of his fingers.

The moment our heroines, who, in that desperation which is one of the forms of cowardice, had hurled themselves on the foe, saw they had caught a Chinese and not a Tartar, flash—the quick-witted poltroons exchanged a streak of purple lightning over the abashed and drooping head, and were two lionesses of valour and dignity in less than half a moment.

It was with the quiet composure of lofty and powerful natures that Josephine opened on him.

He gave a little wince when the first rich tone struck his ear.

'Compose yourself, monsieur; and be so good as to tell us who you are.' Edouard must answer. Now he could not speak through his hands; and he could not face a brace of lionesses; so he took a middle course, removed one hand, and shading himself from Josephine with the other, he gasped out 'I am—my name is Riviere; and I—I—! ladies!'

'Don't be frightened,' said Laure, with an air of imperial clemency, 'we are not very angry.'

'Ah! thank you mademoiselle.'

'So,' resumed Josephine, 'tell us what interest

have you in the fortunes of the Baroness de Beaurepaire?'

'I am so confused, or I could perhaps answer. I don't know how it is, I seem not to have an idea left. Suffer me then, with the greatest respect, to take my leave.' And he was for bolting.

'Not yet, monsieur,' said Josephine. 'Laure!'

Laure went off, looking behind her every now and then.

After a long silence, Edouard muttered—'Do you forgive me, mademoiselle?'

'Yes.' Josephine coloured and was not quite so stately. She added—'We should indeed be harsh judges, monsieur, if we—ah! here *is* Laure with the other. Take these twenty louis which you have been so kind as to leave here.' And her creamy hand held him out the two purses.

The boy started back and put up both his hands in a supplicatory attitude. 'Oh no! ladies—do not—pray do not! Let me speak to you. I think I can say a word or two now, though not as I could wish. Do not reject my friendship. You are alone in the world; your father is dead; your mother has but you to lean on. After all, I am your neighbour, and neighbours should be friends. And I am your debtor; I owe you more than you could ever owe me; for ever since I came into this neighbourhood I have been happy. No man was ever so happy as I, ever since one day I met you out walking. A single glance, a single smile from an angel has done this for me. I owe all my good

thoughts, if I have any, to her. Before I saw her, I vegetated—now I live. Yet you talk of twenty louis—well then yes! I will obey you—I will take them back. So then you will perhaps be generous in your turn. Since you mortify me in this, you will grant what you can grant without hurting your pride; you will accept my service, my devotion. You have no brother—I have no sister. Let me be your brother—and your servant for ever.'

'Monsieur Riviere,' said Josephine, with her delicate curl of her lip, 'you offer us too much, and we have too little to give you in return. Ours is a falling house, and—'

'No! no! mademoiselle, you mistake—you are imposed upon. You fancy you are poor—others that do not care for you say so too! but I, who owe you so much, have looked closer into your interests—your estate is grossly mismanaged; forgive me for saying so. You are rich at this moment if you had but a friend—a man of business. You are cheated through thick and thin—it is abominable—and no wonder; you are women, and don't understand business—you are aristocrats and scorn it.'

'He is no fool,' said Laure, naively.

'And you banish me who could be of such service to you and to Madame the Baroness. Yet you say you forgive my officiousness, but I fear you do not. Ah! no, this vile money has ruined me with you.'

'No! monsieur, no!—you have earned and well merited our esteem.'

'But not your acquaintance.'

The ladies both looked down a little ashamed.

'See now,' said the boy bitterly, 'how reasonable etiquette is. If I had happened to dine at some house where you dined, and some person whom neither of us respected had said to you, "Suffer me to present Monsieur Edouard Riviere to you," I should have the honour and blessing of your acquaintance—that would have been an introduction—but all this is none—and you will never, never speak to me again.' 'He is anything but a fool!' said Laure.

A look of ardent gratitude from Edouard.

'He is very young,' said Josephine, 'and thinks to give society new rules; society is too strong to be dictated to by him or you; let us be serious; Monsieur Edouard, ere we part, and part we must—for your path lies one way, ours another—hear me, who speak in the name of all this ancient house. Your name is not quite new to me—I believe you are a Republican officer, monsieur; but you have acted *en gentilhomme*.'

'Mademoiselle!'

'May your career be brilliant Monsieur Riviere! may those you have been taught to serve, and whom you greatly honour by serving, be more grateful to you than circumstances permit this family to be; we, who were beginning to despair of human goodness, thank you monsieur for showing

us the world is still embellished with hearts like yours!' And she suddenly held him out her hand like a pitying goddess, her purple eye dwelling on him with all the heaven of sentiment in it.

He bowed his head over her hand and kissed it again and again.

'You will make him cry, that will be the next thing,' said Laure with a little gulp.

'No! no! he is too much of a man to cry. And see,' said Josephine, in a motherly tone, 'though we return your poor gold, we keep both purses; Laure takes this one, my mother and I this one; they will be our *souvenirs* of one who wished to oblige without humiliating us.'

'And I think, as his gold is so fugitive I had better imprison it in this purse, which I have just made—there—it would be uncourteous to return him his money loose you know!'

'Ah! mademoiselle, what goodness! Oh! be assured it shall be put to no such base use as carrying money.'

'Adieu then Monsieur Riviere!'

The two sisters were now together, their arms round one another.

'Mademoiselle Laure, Mademoiselle Josephine, conceive if you can my happiness, and my disappointment—adieu!—adieu!' He was gone as slowly and unwillingly as it is possible to go.

'Inaccessible!' said he to himself sadly, as he went slowly home; 'quite inaccessible! Yet there was a moment after the first surprise when I

thought—but no. All the shame of such a surprise, and yet I am no nearer them than before. I am very unhappy! No! I am not. I am the happiest man in France.'

Then he acted the scene all over again, only more adroitly, and blushed again at his want of presence of mind, and concocted speeches for past use, and was hot and cold by turns.

'Poor boy,' said Josephine, 'he is gone away sad, and that has saddened me. But I did my duty, and he will yet live to thank me for freezing at once an attachment I could never have requited.'

'Have you finished your observations, love?' asked Laure drily.

'Yes, Laure.'

'Then—to business.'

'To business?'

'Yes!—no! don't go in yet. A little arrangement between us two arises necessarily out of this affair—that is how the notary talks—and it is as well to settle it at once, say I; because, love, in a day or two, you know, it might be too late—ahem!'

'But settle what?'

'Which of us two takes him, dear—that is all.'

'Takes whom?'

'Edouard,' explained Laure, demurely, lowering her eyes. Josephine glared with wonder and comical horror upon the lovely minx. And after a long look too big for words, she said—

'Next, did I not understand Jacintha to say that it was me the poor child dreams of?'

'Oh! you shall have him, sister,' put in the sly minx warmly, 'if you insist on it.'

'What words are these? I shall be angry by-and-by.'

'Well, I must not annoy you by too great importunity, neither. You have only to say you decline him.'

'Decline him? poor boy! He has never asked me.'

'In short, on one pretence or another, you decline to decline him.'

'How dare you, Laure? Of course I decline him.'

'Thank you, sister,' cried Laure hastily, and kissed her; 'it is the prettiest present you ever gave me—except your love. Ah! what is that on your hand? It is wet—it looks like the dew on a lily. It is a tear from his eye—you cruel woman.'

'No! it was when I spoke kindly to him. I remember now, I did feel something! Poor child!'

'Heart of marble! that affects pity—an hour after. Stay! since our agreement, this belongs to me:' and she drew out a back comb, and down fell a mass of rich brown hair. She swept the dew off the lily with it, and did it up again with a turn of the hand. Josephine sighed deeply.

'You frighten me. Do not run thus wantonly to the edge of a precipice. Take warning by me. Oh, why did we come out? Jacintha, what have you done! !'

'This dear Josephine, with her misgivings! confess, you take me for a fool.'

'I take you for a child that will play with fire if not prevented.'

'At nineteen and a half one is no longer a child. Oh! the blindness of our elders! I know you by heart, Josephine, but you only know a little bit of me. You have only observed the side I turn to you, whom I love better than I shall love any man. Keep your pity for Monsieur Riviere if ever he does fall into my hands; not for me. In a word Josephine, the hour is come for making you a revelation. I am not a child. I am a woman!'

'Ah! all the worse.'

'But not the sort of woman you are—and, Heaven be thanked for both our sakes I am not!'

Josephine opened her eyes. 'She never talked like this to me before—this is your doing, Monsieur Riviere. Unhappy girl, what are you then?—not like me, who love you so! ! ! ! !'

'No, my sister, I have the honour to be your opposite.'

'My opposite!' said Josephine, ruefully.

'I am a devil! !' explained Laure in a mysterious whisper, but with perfect gravity and conviction, aiming at Josephine with her fore finger, to point the remark. She allowed one second for this important statement to sink into her sister's mind, then straightway set to and gambolled in a most elfish way round and round her as Josephine moved stately and thoughtful across the grass to the chateau.

It may well be supposed what was the subject of

conversation at breakfast, and indeed all the day. The young ladies, however drew only the broader outlines of their story; with a natural reserve they gave no hint that they thought Monsieur Riviere was in love with one of them.

The baroness on her part was not disposed to put love ideas into her daughters' heads; she therefore, though too shrewd not to suspect Dan Cupid's hand in this, reserved her suspicions, and spoke of Riviere's act as anyone might, looking only at its delicate, generous, and disinterested side.

Male sagacity, in the person of St. Aubin, prided itself on its superior shrewdness, held the same language as the others, but smiled secretly all the time at female credulity.

Scarce three days had elapsed, three weary days to a friend of ours, when Jacintha, looking through the kitchen window, saw the signal of distress flying from a tree in the park. She slipped out, and there was Edouard Riviere. Her tongue went off with a clash at the moment of contact with him, like a cymbal. First, she exulted over him—'How had it answered trying to draw the wool over Jacintha's eye, eh?' then she related her own sagacity, telling him, as such characters are apt to, half the story. She suppressed Dard's share, for she might want a similar service from Dard again—who knows? But she let him know it was she who had set the ladies in ambush at that time in the morning.

At this young Riviere raised his hands, and eyed

her as a moral alligator. She faced the examination with solid composure, lips parted in a brazen smile, and arms akimbo.

'What! Jacintha, you can stand there and tell me this; what malice! all because out of delicacy, misplaced perhaps, I did not like to tell you.'

'So then you don't see I have been your best friend, ungratefully as you used me?'

'No, Jacintha, indeed I cannot see that—you have ruined me. Judge for yourself.' Then he told her all that had happened in the Pleasance. Very little of it was news to her. Still it interested and excited her to hear it told in a piece, and from his point of view. 'So you see, my poor Jacintha, you have got me dismissed, kindly, but oh! so coldly and firmly—all hope is now dead—alas!'

'Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!'

'Jacintha, do you laugh at the extinction of my hopes?'

'Ha! ha! so she has given you *congé?*'

'Yes, and all that remains for me—'

'Is not to take it.'

'Oh no!' said Riviere sadly, but firmly; 'debarred her love, let me at least have her respect.'

'Her respect? how can she respect a man who turns tail at the first word?'

'But that word is hers, whose lightest word a true and loyal lover is bound to obey to his own cost. Am I not to take a lady at her word?'

'Oh! oh! little sot—no. I must run and make the coffee.'

'Malediction on the coffee! how can you have the heart to think of coffee now, dear Jacintha? Do, pray, explain.'

'What is the use, if you will go and dream that a lady is a man?'

'No, no! I won't fancy any thing; tell me about women, then, if you think you can understand them.'

'I will then. Above all mortal things they despise faint-hearted men. They are on the look-out for something stronger than a woman. A woman hates to have to make the advances. She likes to be always retreating, yet never be off. She is not content to take what she wants, and thank God for it, and that is a man. She must play with it like a cat with a mouse. She must make difficulties. The man *he* is to trample on them. She made them to no other end. If he is such a fool as to let them trample on him, Heaven have mercy on him, for *she* won't! Her two delights are, saying "no" half a dozen times, and saying "yes" at last. If you take her at her word at the first "no," you cause her six bitter disappointments; for then she can't get to say the other "no's," and, worst of all, she can't get to say the "yes" that was in her heart all along. Now, my young mistress is half angel and half woman, so if you give her up because she bids you, she will only despise you; but if it was my other young lady or me, we should hate you as well.'

'Hate me? for selfdenial and obedience?'

'No! Hate you for being a fool! Hate you with a bitterness—there, hate you.'

'What horrible injustice!'

'Justice! who looks to us for justice? We are good creatures, but we don't trouble our heads with justice; it is a word you shall never hear a woman use, unless she happens to be doing some monstrous injustice at that very moment; that is our rule about justice—so, there.'

'Jacintha, your views of your sex are hard, and cynical. Women are nobler and better than men!'

'Ay! ay! you see them a mile off. I see them too near: they can't pass for rainbows here.'

'Pass for rainbows—he! he! Speak for yourself, Jacintha, and for coquettes, and for vulgar women; but do not blaspheme those angelic natures with which I was for one short moment in contact.'

'Ah bah! we are all tarred with the same stick, angels and all—the angels that wear stays.'

'I cannot think so. Besides you were not there; you did not hear how kindly yet how firmly she thanked, yet bade me adieu.'

'I tell you, a word in a man's mouth is a thing, but in a woman's it is only a word.' At this point, without any previous warning, she went into a passion like gunpowder kindled. 'Take your own way!' she cried; 'this boy knows more than I do. So be it—let us speak no more of it.'

'Cruel Jacintha, to quarrel with me, who have

no other friend. There—I am your pupil; for, after all, your sagacity is great. Advise me like a sister—I listen.'

'No; good advice is never welcome.'

'It is so seldom given kindly.'

'Oh! as to that, I could not speak unkindly to you, my little cabbage; but I shall make you unhappy, and then I shall be unhappy; for you see, with all ourf aults, we have not bad hearts, we women.'

'Speak, Jacintha.'

'I am going to; and when I have spoken, I shall never see your pretty face again so near to mine—so you see I am disinterested; and—oh! how I hate telling the truth!' cried she with pious fervour; 'it always makes everybody miserable.'

'Jacintha, remember what you said in its favour the first time we met.'

'I don't remember for my part, and what signifies what I said? Words—air! Well my poor child, I will advise you like a mother—give her up.'

'Give her up?'

'Think no more of her: for there is a thing in your way that is as hard to get over as all her nonsensical words are easy.'

'Oh! what is it? You make me tremble.'

'It is a man.'

'Ah!'

'There is another man in the way.'

'Who?—that vile old doctor?'

'Oh! if it was no worse than that. No! it is a young one. Oh, you don't know him—he has not been here for years; but what of that, if his image lies in her heart? And it does. I listened the other day, and I heard something that told its own tale. I am cruel to you my son—forgive me!' Jacintha scarcely dared look at her feeble-minded novice. She did not like to see her blow fall and him stagger and turn pale under it. When she did look, lo and behold! he was red instead of pale.

'What is he?' (in a stern voice.)

'He is a soldier.'

'I am glad of that: then he will fight, and I'll kill him.'

'Hear to that now!'

'And you think I will give in now! resign her to an unworthy rival?'

'Who said he was unworthy?'

'I say so.'

'What makes you fancy that?'

'Because he never comes near the place—because he neglects what none but a villain could neglect, the greatest treasure in the world. No! he deserves to lose it—and he shall lose it. Thank you Jacintha! you show me my folly. I will not take her *congé* now, rely on it. No! no! if she bade me do any thing in the world to please her, and her alone, I would do it, though I had to go through fire and water, and blood, and break my heart doing it. But if she asks me to make way for a rival, I answer—never!—never!—never!'

'But if she loves him?'

'A passing fancy, and the object of it unworthy: it is my duty to cure her of a misplaced attachment that can never make her happy, sweet angel! she will live to thank me—to bless me!—I say whose side are you on—his or mine?'

'Wretch, do you ask me?'

'Do they walk in the park?'

'Half an hour every day.'

'What time?'

'Uncertain.'

'And I can't see into the park for that great infernal elm tree at the corner: it just blocks up my window—if I cut it down some night will you tell?'

'Not I. Would you really have the forehead to cut down one of the Beaurepaire elms?—holy saints!'

'Look for it to-morrow,' said he grimly, 'and look low enough or you won't see it. I'll cut one of your elms down with as little remorse as I would half a dozen rivals.'

'He is mad—after all I want firewood, and above all I want brushwood for my oven: for you are to understand my friend there is some meal come in from the tenants, and so—'

'That's right! think kitchen! talk kitchen! pray does your soul live in a kitchen as well as your body?'

'Monsieur!'

'Forgive me, my blood is on fire—I take your

advice: you shall never have to spur me again. It is clear you know the sex best: she shall make as many difficulties as she pleases. She shall say "no" twelve times instead of six, if it amuses her: I will court her, I will besiege her, I'll fight for her against all the soldiers on earth, and all the fiends in you know where.' Whirr—he was away.

Jacintha gazed after her pupil and firework with ardent admiration so long as his graceful active figure was in sight.

Then she fell into a reverie—an unusual mood with this active personage.

It is not customary, in polite fiction, to go into the reflecting part of a servant-maid: let us therefore make a point of doing it, for to be vulgar in the eyes of snobs and snobbesses is no mean distinction.

'Look there now!—they say you should give and take. Well, I gave a lesson: and now I have taken one. From fourteen to fourscore a man is a man, and a woman is a woman. Write that in your mass books, for it is as true as gospel. School is never over while we *are* in the world. I thought I knew something too: but I was all behind. Now to me a woman is the shallowest thing the Lord ever made. I can plumb it with my forefinger. But to a man they are as deep as the ocean. And, no doubt, men can read one another: but they beat me. She put up a straw between him and her, and he fell back as if it was

Goliah's spear, that was as thick as—what was it as thick as? I showed him an iron door between them, and he flies at it as if it was a sheet of brown paper, MOTHER OF HEAVEN! MY POT! MY POT!'

She fled wildly.

CHAPTER VII.

'MADAME the Baroness, if you please there is a tree blown down in the park.'

'Impossible child! there was no wind at all last night.'

'No madame, but there was a night or two ago.'

Laure giggled.

'Well mademoiselle, that might loosen it.'

Laure laughed; but the baroness was grave.

'Let us all go and look at it,' said she, sadly; a tree was an old friend to her.

There lay the monster on the earth that was ploughed and harrowed by its hundred arms and thousand fingers; its giant proportions now first revealed by the space of earth it covered, and the frightful gap its fall left in the air and the prospect. The doctor inspected the tree, especially the stump, and said—'Humph!'

The baroness looked only at the mass and the ruin.

'An ill-omen, children,' said she. 'It stood out the storm; and then one calm night it fell. And so it will be with the House of Beaurepaire.'

'Ah well,' said Jacintha, in a comfortable tone, 'now you are down, we must do the best we can with you. I wanted some firewood—and I wanted some small wood terribly.'

The baroness shrugged her shoulders at this kitchen philosophy, and moved away with Josephine. The doctor detained Laure. 'Now it is no use telling your mother, to annoy her, but this tree has been cut down.'

'Impossible!'

'Fact. Come and look at the stub. I have stood and seen thousands of trees felled—it is an interesting operation; comes next to taking off a—hem! See how clean three fourths of the wood have come away. They have had the cunning to cut three feet above the ground too; but this is not Nature's work—it is man's. Laure it wanted but this; you have an enemy—a secret enemy.'

'Ah!' cried Laure, with flashing eyes, and making her hand into an angular snowball; 'oh! that I had him here! I'd—ah! ah!' This doughty threat ended in two screams, for a young gentleman sprang from the road over the hedge, and alighted close to them. He took off his hat, and blushing like a rose, poured out a flood of excuses. 'Mademoiselle—monsieur, I saw that a large tree had fallen, and my curiosity—forgive my indiscretion'—and he affected a retreat, but cast a lingering look at the fallen tree.

'Remain, monsieur,' said St. Aubin, politely; 'and as your eyes are younger than mine, I will

even ask you to examine the stump and also the tree, and tell me whether my suspicions are correct. Has this tree fallen by accident, or by the hand of man?'

Riviere darted on the stump with the fire of curiosity in his face, and examined it keenly. His deportment was not bad comedy. 'This tree has been cut down. See, mademoiselle,' cried the young rogue, determined to bring her into conversation, 'observe this cut here in the wood; look, here are the marks of the teeth of a saw.'

This brought Laure close to him, and he gave a prolix explanation to keep her there, and asked her whether she saw this, and whether she saw that; so then she was obliged to speak to him. He proved to their entire satisfaction that somebody had cut down the elm. 'The rogue!' cried St. Aubin. 'The wretch!' cried Laure.

Riviere looked down, and resumed his inspection of the stump.

'Oh that I had him!' said Laure, still at fever heat.

'I wish you had, mademoiselle,' said Edouard, with a droll look. Then with an air of imposing gravity, 'Monsieur, I have the honour to serve the government in this district, as you may perhaps be aware.'

St. Aubin looked at Laure for explanation.

She would not give any, because, by revealing the young man's name she would have enabled St. Aubin to put the purse and this jump over the

hedge together. She coloured at the bare thought, but said nothing. Riviere went on. 'If you really suspect this has been done out of malice, I will set an inquiry on foot.'

'You are very good, monsieur. It certainly is a mysterious affair.'

'Give yourself no further anxiety about it, sir. I take it into my hands—in doing so, I merely discharge my duty; need I add, mademoiselle, that duty is for once a pleasure? If any of the neighbours is the culprit, it will transpire; if not, still the present government is, I assure you, sir, a Briareus, and one of its hands will fall sooner or later on him who has dared to annoy you, mademoiselle.'

As a comment on these words of weight, he drew out his pocket-book with such an air: made a minute or two, and returned it to his pocket. 'Monsieur, mademoiselle, receive once more my excuses for my indiscreet curiosity, which I shall never cease to regret, unless it should lead to the discovery of what you have at heart.' And he bowed himself away.

'A charming young man, my dear.'

'What that little buck—do you see charms in him?—where?'

'Buck? a young Apollo, beaming with goodness as well as intelligence.'

'Oh! oh! oh! doctor.'

'I have not seen such a face for ever so long,' cried the doctor, getting angry.

'I don't desire to see such another for ever so long.'

'Confess, at least, that his manners are singularly graceful.'

'Republican ease, doctor—admire it—those who *can*.'

'It was the respectful ease of a young person not desirous to attract attention to his own grace, but simply to be polite.'

'Now I thought his flying over our hedge, and taking our affairs on him and his little pocket-book, a great piece of effrontery.' 'If it had not been done with equal modesty and deference,—but the poor boy is a Republican. So you cannot be just. Oh politics! politics!—You madden the brain—you bandage the judgment—you corrupt the heart—let us see whether they have blinded your very eyes. Did you notice his colour—roses and lilies side by side? Come, now.'

'A boy's complexion, staring red and white!—Yes.'

'And his eyes full of soul.'

'Yes, he had wildish eyes. If you want to be stared out of countenance, send for Monsieur Riv—hum—what did he say his name was?'

'I forget. A figure like Antinous, with all Diana's bounding grace.'

'Oh! he can jump high enough to frighten one: enchanting quality.'

'Well, mademoiselle, I shall not subject him to further satire by praising him. He serves France

and not the Bourbons; and is therefore a monster, ugly and even old. Let us speak of more important matters.'

'If you please,' said Laure, drily. And they did.

And the effect of the rise in themes was that Laure became distracted, and listened badly; and every now and then she slipped back to the abandoned subject, and made a number of half concessions, one at a time, in favour of the young Republican's looks, manners, and conduct—all to please the doctor. So that at last she and St. Aubin were not so very far apart in their estimate of the youth. Arrived at the park gate leading into the Pleasance, she turned suddenly round, beamed and blushed all over with pleasure, and put her arms round the puzzled doctor's neck and kissed him; then scudded off like a rabbit after her sister who was on the south terrace. 'Dard, I've a little job for you,' said Jacintha, cheerily.

'Ugh! oh! have you?'

'You must put up the grindstone. Stop! don't go off—that is not all. Put a handle in it, and then sharpen the great axe—the hatchet is not a bit of use.'

'Any more?'

'Yes; to-morrow you must go into the park with your wheelbarrow, and cut me billet wood for up stairs and small wood for my oven.' The much-enduring man set about this new job.

The demoiselles De Beaurepaire coming out

into the park for their afternoon walk, saw a figure hacking away at the fallen tree. They went towards it near enough to recognise Dard: then they turned and took their usual walk. They made sure Jacintha had ordered him to do it.

They had not been in the park a minute before a telescope was levelled from a window at them, and the next moment M. Edouard was running up the road to Beaurepaire.

Now as he came near the fallen tree he heard loud cries for help, followed by groans of pain. He bounded over the hedge, and there was Dard hanging over his axe faint and moaning. 'What is the matter?—what is the matter?' cried Edouard running to him.

'Oh! oh!—cut my foot.'

Edouard looked, and turned sick, for there was a gash right through Dard's shoe, and the blood welling up through it. But, recovering himself by an effort of the will, he cried out—'Courage, my lad! don't give in—thank Heaven there's no artery there. Oh, dear, it is a terrible cut! Let us get you home, that is the first thing! Can you walk?'

'Lord bless you, no! nor stand either without help.'

Edouard flew to the wheelbarrow, and reversing i spun a lot of billet out. 'Ye must not do that,' said Dard, with all the energy he was capable of in his present condition—'why that is Jacintha's

wood.' 'To the devil with Jacintha and her wood too!' cried Edouard, 'a man is worth more than a faggot. Come Dard, I shall wheel you home: it is only just across the park.'

With some difficulty he lifted him into the barrow.

'How lucky,' he cried, 'I have got my shooting jacket on, so here's my brandy flask: take a suck at it old fellow—and courage!' Dard stretched out his hand with sudden animation for the flask, and it was soon glued to his lips.

Now the ladies, as they walked, saw a man wheeling a barrow across the park, and took no particular notice: but, as Riviere was making for the same point, presently the barrow came near enough for them to see a man's head and arms in it. Laure was the first to notice this. 'Look! look! if he is not wheeling Dard in the barrow now.'

'Who?'

'Do you ask who? Who provides all our amusement?'

'Laure, I do not like this. I am afraid there is something wrong. Consider, Monsieur Riviere would not wheel Dard all across the park for amusement.'

'Oh! let us run and see.'

Now Riviere did not intend them to see; he had calculated on getting to the corner a considerable time before the promenaders. But they hastened their speed, and defeated his intention.

He had taken his coat off too, and made a great effort to beat them. 'Dard, said he, 'now here are the young ladies, what a pity—put my coat over your foot, that is a good fellow.'

'What for?' said Dard, sulkily: 'No! let them see what they have done with their little odd jobs: this is my last for one while. I shan't go on two legs again this year.'

The ladies came up with them.

'Oh, monsieur,' said Josephine, 'what is the matter?'

'We have met with a little accident mademoiselle, that is all. Dard has hurt his foot—nothing to speak of, but I thought he would be best at home.'

Laure raised the coat which Riviere in spite of Dard had flung over his foot, and removed it.

'He is bleeding! Dard is bleeding! Oh, my poor Dard. Oh! oh!'

'Hush! Laure! Laure!'

'No! don't put him out of heart mademoiselle. Take another pull at the flask Dard. If you please ladies, I must have him home without delay.'

'Oh yes, but I want him to have a surgeon,' cried Josephine. 'Ah! why are we so poor, and no horses nor people to send off as we used to have?'

'Mademoiselle, have no fears. Dard shall have the best surgeon in the district by his side in less than an hour: the town is but two short leagues off.'

'Have you a horse then ?'

'No; but I am as good a runner as any for miles round. I'll run it out in half an hour or die at it, and I'll send the surgeon up full gallop.'

'Heaven bless you monsieur, you have a good heart,' cried Josephine.

'Oh, yes! Heaven bless him.'

He was already gone: but these sweet words rang in his ears and ran warm round and round his heart, as he straightened his arms and his back to the work. When they had gone about a hundred yards a single snivel went off in the wheelbarrow. Five minutes after, Dard was at home in charge of his grandmother, his shoe off, his foot in a wet linen cloth; and the statesman, his coat tied round the neck, squared his shoulders and ran the two short leagues out. He ran them in thirty-five minutes, found the surgeon at home, told the case, pooh poohed that worthy's promise to go to the patient presently, darted into his stable, saddled the horse, brought him round, saw the surgeon into the saddle, started him, dined at the restaurateur's, strolled back, and was in time to get a good look at the Chateau of Beaurepaire before the sun set on it.

Jacintha came into Dard's cottage that evening.

'So you have been and done it my man,' cried she cheerfully and rather roughly; then sat down and rocked herself, with her apron over her head. She explained this anomalous proceeding to his grandmother privately. 'I thought I would keep

his heart up any way; but you see I was not fit.'

Calmer, she comforted Dard, and ended by cross questioning him. The young ladies had told her what they had seen, and though Dard was too wrapped up in himself to dwell with any gusto upon Edouard's zeal and humanity, still, as far as facts went, he confirmed the ladies' comments.

Jacintha's heart yearned towards the young man. She was in the town next day making a purchase or two, so she called on him. 'I thought I would just step in to put a question to you. Would you like to get a word with her alone?'

'Oh, Jacintha!'

'Hush! don't shout like that; why you may be sure she is alone sometimes, though not very often. They love one another so, those two.'

Jacintha then developed her plan. As the dish-cloth was his signal, so she must have a signal to show when she wanted to speak to him, and that signal should be a sheet, which she would hang over the battlement of Beaurepaire Chateau.

'So when you see a white sheet, you come to me—the quicker the better. It is the least I can do now. You know what I mean. I won't speak about it. Words in a woman's mouth—I told you what they are. No, I won't end in steam, like boiling water does. I won't *say*, I'll *show* you what you have done my angel.' Her eyes told him all the same.

'Where is my dish-clout? You never left it out

there on the tree, did you?' and she looked solemn.

'Jacintha! on my knees I demand pardon for my fatal heedlessness.' Jacintha put her hand under her apron and pulled out the cloth. 'There,' said she, and threw it him. 'Now suppose you had wanted to speak to me—ah well, we can't have all; you have a good heart, but no head.'

Dard's grandmother had a little house, a little land, a little money, and a little cow. She could just keep Dard and herself, and her resources enabled Dard to do so many little odd jobs for love, yet keep his favourite organ tolerably filled.

'Go to bed my little son, since you are hashed,' said Dard's grandmother. 'Bed be hanged,' cried he. 'What good is bed? That's another silly old custom wants doing away with. It weakens you—it turns you into train oil—it is the doctor's friend, and the patient's enemy. Many a one shuts up through taking to bed, that could have got through his trouble if he had kept his feet like a man. If I was dying I would not go to bed till I went to the bed with a spade in it. No! sit up like Julius Cæsar, and die as you lived, in your clothes: don't strip yourself: let the old women strip you—that is their delight laying out a chap: that is the time they brighten up, the old sorceresses.' He concluded this amiable rhapsody, the latter part of which was levelled at a lugubrious weakness of his grandmother's for the superfluous embellish-

ment of the dead, by telling her it was bad enough to be tied by the foot like an ass, without settling down on his back like a cast sheep. 'Give me the armchair. I'll sit in it, and if I have any friends they will show it now: they will come and tell me what is going on in the village, for I can't get out to see it and hear it, they must know that.'

Seated in state in his granny's easy chair, the loss of which after thirty years' use made her miserable, she couldn't tell why, le Sieur Dard awaited his friends.

His friends did not come.

The rain did, and poured all the afternoon. Night came, and solitude. Dard boiled over with bitterness.

'They are then a lot of pigs; all those fellows I have drunk with at Bigot's and Simmet's. Down with all fair weather friends!!'

The next day the sun shone, the air was clear, and the sky blue. 'Ah! let us see now,' cried Dard.

Alas! no fellow-drinkers, no fellow-smokers came to console their hurt fellow. And Dard, who had boiled with anger yesterday was now sad and despondent.

'Down with egoists,' he groaned.

About three in the afternoon came a tap at the door.

'Ah! at last,' cried Dard: 'come in!'

The door was slowly opened and two lovely faces appeared at the threshold. The Demoiselles

De Beaurepaire wore a tender look of interest and pity when they caught sight of Dard, and on the old woman curtseying to them they curtseyed to her and Dard. But when Dard put his arms on the chair to rise and salute them, Laure put up her finger and peremptorily forbade him. The next moment they were close to him, one a little to his right, the other to his left, and two pair of sapphire eyes with the mild lustre of sympathy playing down incessantly upon him. How was he? How had he slept? Was he in pain? Was he in much pain? tell the truth now. Was there anything to eat or drink he could fancy? Jacintha should make it and bring it, if it was within their means.

A prince could not have had more solicitous attendants; nor a fairy king lovelier and less earthly ones.

He looked in heavy amazement from one to the ther. Laure laughed at him, then Josephine smiled. Laure bent, and was by some supple process on one knee, taking the measure of the wounded foot. When she first approached it he winced: but the next moment he smiled. He had never been touched like this—it was contact and no contact—she treated his foot as the zephyr the violets—she handled it as if it had been some sacred thing. By the help of his eye he could ust know she was touching him.

'There monsieur, you are measured for a list shoe.'

'And I will make it for you Dard,' said Josephine.

'Don't you believe her Dard: I shall make it: she is indolent.' 'We will both make it then,' said Josephine.

Dard grinned an uncertain grin.

At the door they turned and sent back each a smile brimful of comfort, promise, and kindness, to stay with him till next visit. Dard scratched his head. Dard pondered half an hour in silence thus, or thereabouts.

The old woman had been to milk the cow. She now came into the kitchen.

Dard sang out lustily to her—'Granny I'm better. Keep your heart up old lady: we shan't die this bout. I am good for a few more little odd jobs,' said he, with a sudden tincture of bitterness.

Presently in came Jacintha with a basket crying, 'I have not a minute to stay now: Dard, my young ladies have sent you two bottles of old Burgundy—you won't like that—and here is a loaf I have just made. And now I must go:' and she stayed three quarters of an hour with him, and cheered him mightily. At dusk Riviere rode by—fastened his horse up and came bustling in. 'How do we get on dame?'

'Pretty well monsieur. He was very dull at first, but now he is brightened up a bit poor thing. All the great folks come here to see him—the Demoiselles de Beaurepaire and all.'

'Ah! that is like them.'

'Oh! as to that, my little son is respected far and wide,' said the old lady inflating herself; and, as gratitude cannot live an instant with conceit, she went on to say, 'and after all it is the least they can do, for he has been a good friend to them, and never seen the colour of their money. Also! behold him hashed in their service—a wounded foot—that is all ever he took out of Beaurepaire.'

'Hold your tongue,' cried Dard brutally; 'if I don't complain, what right have you?' He added doggedly, but rather gently, 'The axe was in my hand, not in theirs—let us be just before all things.'

The statesman sat at breakfast, eating roasted kidneys with a little melted butter and parsley under them, and drinking a tumbler of old Medoc slightly diluted—a modest repast becoming his age, and the state of his affections. On his writing table lay waiting for him a battle array of stubborn figures. He looked at them over his tumbler, 'Ah!' said he, 'to-day I must be all the state's. Even you must not keep me from those dry calculations oh! well-beloved chateau of Beau-re-pai——ah! my telescope—it is!—it is.' [*Exit statesman.*

The white flag was waving from the battlements.

When he got half way to Beaurepaire, he found to his horror he had forgotten that wretched cloth.

However he would not go back: he trusted to Jacintha's intelligence. It did not deceive him. He found her waiting for him.

'She is gone alone to Dard's house. The other will be after her soon—forward! !'

He flew; he knocked with beating heart at Dard's door. At another time he should have knocked and opened without further invitation.

'Come in,' cried Dard's stentorian voice. He entered, and there, seated on a chair, with a book in her hand, was—Mademoiselle Josephine de Beaurepaire.

Riviere stared—stupefied, mystified.

The young lady rose with a smile, curtseyed, and reseated herself. She was as self possessed as he was flurried and puzzled what to say or do. He recovered himself a little, inquired with wonderful solicitude Dard's present symptoms, and suddenly remembering the other lady was expected, he said —'I leave you in good hands; angel visitors are best enjoyed alone,' and retired slowly, with a deep obeisance. Once outside the door, dignity vanished in alacrity; he flew off into the park, and ran as hard as he could towards the chateau. He was within fifty yards of the little gate, when sure enough Laure emerged. They met; his heart beat violently. 'Ah! mademoiselle!—'

'Ah! it is Monsieur Riviere, I declare,' said Laure coolly, all over blushes though.

'Yes mademoiselle, and I am so out of breath. I am sent for you. Mademoiselle Josephine

awaits you at Dard's house.' 'She sent you for me?' inquired Laure arching her brows.

'Not positively, Mademoiselle Laure.'

'How pat he has our names too!'

'But I could see I should please her by coming for you; there is, I believe, a bull or so about.'

'A bull or two; don't talk in that reckless way monsieur. She has done well to send you; let us make haste.'

'But I am a little out of breath.'

'Oh, never mind that! I abhor bulls.'

'But, mademoiselle, we are not come to them yet, and the faster we go now the sooner we shall.'

'Yes; but I always like to get a disagreeable thing over as soon as possible,' said Laure slily.

'Ah,' replied Edouard mournfully, 'in that case let us make haste.'

After a little spurt mademoiselle relaxed the pace of her own accord, and even went slower than before. There was an awkward silence. Edouard eyed the park boundary, and thought—'Now what I have to say I must say before we get to you;' and being thus impressed with the necessity of immediate action, he turned to lead.

Laure eyed him, and the ground, alternately, from under her long lashes.

At last he began to colour and flutter. She saw something was coming, and all the woman donned defensive armour.

'Mademoiselle.'

'Monsieur.'

'Is it quite decided that your family refuse my acquaintance, my services, which I still—forgive me—press on you? Ah! Mademoiselle Laure, am I never to have the happiness of—of—even speaking to you?'

'It appears so,' said Laure drily.

'Have you then decided against me too? That happy day it was only mademoiselle who crushed my hopes.'

'I?' asked Laure; 'what have I to do with it?'

'Can you ask? Do you not see that it is not Mademoiselle Josephine, but you I—What am I saying? but, you understand too well.'

'No, monsieur,' said Laure with a puzzled air, 'I do not understand. Not one word of all you are saying do I comprehend. I am sure it is Josephine and not me; for I am only a child.'

'You a child—an angel like you?'

'Ask any of them, they will tell you I am a child; and it is to that I owe this conversation, no doubt; if you did not look on me as a child, you would not dare take this liberty with me,' said the young cat, scratching without a moment's notice.

'Mademoiselle, do not be angry. I was wrong.'

'Oh! never mind. Children are little creatures without reserve, and treated accordingly, and to notice them is to honour them.'

'Adieu then, mademoiselle. Try to believe no one respects you more than I do.'

'Yes, let us part, for there is Dard's house;

and I begin to suspect that Josephine never sent you.'

'I confess it.'

'There, he confesses it. I thought so all along!! What a dupe I have been!!' 'I will offend no more,' said Riviere humbly.

'We shall see.'

'Adieu, mademoiselle. God bless you! May you find friends as sincere as I am, and more to your taste!'

'Heaven hear your prayers!' replied the malicious thing, casting up her eyes with a mock tragic air.

Edouard sighed; a chill conviction that she was both heartless and empty fell on him. He turned away without another word. She called to him with a sudden airy cheerfulness that made him start. 'Stay, monsieur, I forgot—I have something to tell you.'

He returned, all curiosity.

'And a favour to ask you.'

'I am so glad.'

'You have made a conquest.'

'I have a difficulty in believing you, mademoiselle.'

'Oh! it is not a lady,' said little Malice.

'Ah! then it is possible,' was the bitter reply.

'Something better—less terrestrial, you know—it is a *savant*. You jumped, you spoke, you conquered Doctor St. Aubin, that day. What do you think he says?'

'I have no idea.'

'He says you are handsome,' (opening her eyes to the full height of astonishment.) 'He says you are graceful; and, indeed it was not a bad jump; I have been looking at it since; and oh! Monsieur Riviere, he says you are modest!!!!!!!'

'Did he say all this before you?'

'Yes.'

'Heaven reward him!'

'Was it not odd he should have ventured on these statements before me? but these *savants* can face a deal of contradiction.'

'You did me the honour to contradict all this?'

'I did not fail.'

'Thank you, mademoiselle.'

'That is right, be unjust. No, monsieur; to detract from undeniable merit was not my real object; but not being quite such a child as some people think, I contradicted him, in order to—to—confirm him in those good sentiments; and I succeeded; the proof is that the doctor desires your acquaintance, monsieur; and now I come to the favour I have to ask you.'

'Ah, yes—the favour.'

'Be so kind as to bestow your acquaintance on Monsieur St. Aubin,' said Laure, her manner changing from sauciness to the timidity of a person asking a favour. 'He will not discredit my recommendation. Above all, he will not make difficulties, for he is really worth knowing. In short, believe me, it will be an excellent acquaint-

ance for you—and for him,' added she with all the grace of the De Beaurepaires. 'What say you, monsieur?'

Riviere was mortified to the heart's core. 'She refuses to know me herself,' thought he, 'but she will use my love to make me amuse that old man.' His heart swelled against her injustice and ingratitude, and his crushed vanity turned to strychnine. 'Mademoiselle,' said he, bitterly and doggedly, but sadly, 'were I so happy as to have your esteem, my heart would overflow, not only on the doctor, but on every honest person around. But if I must not have the acquaintance I value more than life, suffer me to be alone in the world, and never to say a word either to Doctor St. Aubin, or to any human creature if I can help it.' The imperious young beauty drew herself up.

'So be it, monsieur; you teach me how a child should be answered that forgets herself, and asks —*Dieu!*—asks a favour of a stranger—a perfect stranger,' added she with a world of small ill-nature.

Could one of the dog days change to mid-winter in a second, it would hardly seem so cold and cross as Laure de Beaurepaire turned from the smiling saucy fairy of the moment before. Edouard felt a portcullis of ice come down between her and him. She curtseyed and glided away. He bowed and stood frozen to the spot.

He felt so lonely and so bitter, he must go to Jacintha for something to lean on and scold.

He put his handkerchief up in the tree, and out came Jacintha, curious. 'You left the dish-clout at home, I bet—what a head!—well, well, tell us.'

'A fine blunder you made, Jacintha. It was Mademoiselle Josephine at Dard's.'

'Do you call that a blunder—ingrate?'

'Yes! Why, it is not Josephine I love.'

'Yes, it is,' replied Jacintha.

'No! no!'

'Change of wind then, since yesterday!'

'No! no! How can you be so stupid—fancy not seeing it is Mademoiselle Laure.'

'Laure! that child?'

'She is not a child; she is quite the reverse. Don't call her a child—she objects to it—it puts her in a passion.'

'You have deceived me,' said Jacintha severely.

'Never!'

'You have. You never breathed Laure's name to me.'

'No more I did Josephine's.'

'What has that to do with it? You pretended to be in love with my young lady.'

'No! with one of them, I said.'

'Well! and how was I to guess by that it was Laure?'

'And how were you to guess it was Josephine?'

'There was no guessing in the case; if it was not Josephine, anybody with sense would have told a body it was Laure; but you are mad. Besides, who would look at Laure when Josephine was by?

Mademoiselle Laure is very well; she has a pretty little face enough, but she is not a patch upon mademoiselle.'

'Why, Jacintha, you are blind. But this is the way; you women are no judges of female beauty. They are both lovely, but Laure is the brightest, the gayest—oh, her smile! It seems brighter than ever now; for I have seen her frown, Jacintha; think of that and pity me. I have seen her frown.'

'And if you look this way, you may see me frown.'

'Why, what is the matter with you?'

'The matter is, that I wash my hands of the whole affair. It is infamous.'

Jacintha then let him know, in her own language, that such frightful irregularities as this could not pass in an ancient family, where precedent and decorum reigned, and had for centuries. 'The elder daughter must be got off our hands first; then let the younger take her turn.' To gild the pill of decorum, she returned to her original argument. 'Be more reasonable, my son, above all, less blind. She is nice, she is frisky; but she is not like Josephine, the belle of belles.'

Edouard, in reply, anxious to conciliate his only friend, affected to concede the palm of beauty to the elder sister, but suggested that Laure was quite beautiful enough for ordinary purposes,—such as to be fallen in love with,—nearer his own age, too, than Josephine. He was proceeding

adroitly to suggest that he stood hardly high enough in France to pretend to the heiress of Beaurepaire, and must not look above the younger branch of that ancient tree, when Jacintha, who had not listened to a word he was saying, but had got over her surprise, and was now converted to his side by her own reflections, interrupted him.

'And therefore, yes,' said this vacillating personage, carrying out one of her internal chains of reasons. 'Next, I could not promise you Josephine, but Laure you shall have if you can be content with her.' The boy threw his arms round her neck. 'Quite content with Laure,' said he, 'quite content, you dear Jacintha.' Then his countenance fell.

'I forgot,' said he; 'in the heat of discussion one forgets everything.'

'Forgot what?' cried Jacintha, in some alarm.

'I have just lost her for ever.'

Jacintha put her hands on her hips, knuckles downwards.

'Now then,' said she, with something between a groan and a grin, 'what have you been at?'

He related his interview, all but the last passage.

Jacintha congratulated him.

'Why, it goes swimmingly. You are very lucky. I wonder she spoke to you at all out there all alone. In Dard's cottage I knew she would, because she could not help. Well.'

Then he told her Laure's parting request.

'I say, mademoiselle,' cried Jacintha, 'you are

coming on pretty well for a novice. There is one that has a head. You thanked and blessed her, &c.'

'No, indeed, I did not. I declined—oh! very respectfully.' 'Very respectfully!' repeated Jacintha, with disdain. 'You really are not safe to go alone. Nevertheless, I can't be always at his elbow. Do you know what you have done?'

'No.'

'You have made her hate you, that is all.'

Riviere defended himself. 'It was so unjust to refuse me her acquaintaince, and then ask me to amuse that ancient personage.'

Jacintha looked him in the face, sneering like a fiend.

'Listen to a parable, Monsieur the Blind,' said she. 'Once there was a little boy madly in love with raspberry jam.'

'A thing I hate.'

'It is false, monsieur; one does not hate raspberry jam. He came to the store closet, where he knew there were a score jars of it, and—oh! misery—the door was locked. He kicked the door, and wept bitterly. His mamma came and said, "Here is the key," and gave him the key. And what did he do? Why, he fell to crying and roaring, and kicking the door. "I don't wa-wa-wa-wa-nt the key-ey-ey. I wa-a-ant the jam—oh! oh! oh! oh!" ' and Jacintha mimicked to the life the mingled grief and ire of infancy debarred its jam. Edouard wore a puzzled air, but it was

only for a moment; the next he hid his face in his hands, and cried, 'Fool! fool! fool!'

'I shall not contradict you,' said his Mentor, with affected politeness.

'She was my best friend.'

'Who doubts it?'

'Once acquainted with the doctor, I could visit at Beaurepaire.'

'Parbleu!'

'She had thought of a way to reconcile my wishes with this terrible etiquette that reigns here.'

'She thinks to more purpose than you do—that is clear.'

'Nothing is left now but to ask her pardon—and to consent—I am off.'

'No, you are not,' and Jacintha laid a grasp of iron on him. 'Will you be quiet?—is not one blunder a day enough? If you go near her now, she will affront you, and order the doctor not to speak to you.'

'Oh, Jacintha! your sex then are fiends of malice?'

'While it lasts. Luckily with us nothing does last very long. Take your orders from me.'

'Yes, general,' said the young man, touching his hat.

'Don't go near her till you have made the doctor's acquaintance; that is easily done. He walks two hours on the east road every day, with his feet in the puddles and his head in the clouds.'

'But how am I to get him out of the clouds?'

'With the first black beetle you meet.'

'A black beetle!'

'Ay! catch her when you can. Have her ready for use in your handkerchief: pull a long face: and says you—"Excuse me monsieur, I have the misfortune not to know the Greek name of this merchandize here." Say that, and behold him launched. He will christen the beast in Hebrew and Latin as well as Greek, and tell you her history down from the flood: next he will beg her of you, and out will come a cork and a pin, and behold the creature impaled. Thus it is that man loves beetles. He has a thousand pinned down at home—beetles, butterflies and so forth. When I go near the lot with my duster he trembles like an aspen. I pretend to be going to clean them, but it is to see the face he makes, for even a domestic requires to laugh: but I never do clean them, for after all he is more stupid than wicked, poor man: I have not therefore the sad courage to annihilate him.'

'Let us return to our beetle—what will his tirades about the antiquity of the beetle advance me?'

'Wretch! one begins about a beetle, but one ends Heaven knows where.' She turned suddenly grave. 'All this does not prevent my pot from being on the fire:' and her heart of hearts being now in the kitchen, Riviere saw it was useless to detain her body, so thanking her warmly made at once

for the east road. Sure enough he fell in with the doctor, but not being armed with an insect he had to take refuge in a vegetable—the fallen elm. He told St. Aubin he had employed a person to keep his ears open, and if anything transpired at either of the taverns to let him know. 'You have done well monsieur,' said the doctor; 'when the wine goes in the secrets ooze out.'

The next time they met, Riviere was furnished with an enormous chrysalis. He had found it in a hedge, and was struck with its singular size. He produced it and with modest diffidence and twinkling eye sought information.

The doctor's eye glittered.

'The death's head moth!' he cried with enthusiasm—'the death's head moth! a great rarity in this district. Where found you this?' Riviere undertook to show him the place.

It was half a league distant. Coming and going he had time to make friends with St. Aubin, and this was the easier that the old gentleman, who was a physiognomist as well as ologist, had seen goodness and sensibility in Edouard's face. At the end of the walk he begged the doctor to accept the chrysalis. The doctor coquetted.

'That would be a robbery. You take an interest in these things yourself—at least I hope so!'

The young rogue confessed modestly to the sentiment of entomology, but 'the Government worked him so hard as to leave him no hopes of shining in so high a science,' said he sorrowfully.

The doctor pitied him. 'A young man of your attainments and tastes to be debarred from the everlasting secrets of Nature, by the fleeting politics of the day, in which it is so seldom that any great principle is evolved.'

Riviere shrugged his shoulders. 'Somebody must do the dirty work,' said he, chuckling inwardly.

The chrysalis went to Beaurepaire in the pocket of a grateful man. 'Oh wise Jacintha!' said the lover, 'I thought you were humbugging me, but his heart is in these things. We are a league nearer one another than yesterday.'

The doctor related his conversation with young Riviere, on whom he pronounced high encomiums, levelling them at Laure the detractor from his merit, as if he was planting so many death blows. Her saucy eyes sparkled with fun: you might have lighted a candle at one and exploded a mine at the other; but not a syllable did she utter.

The white flag waved from the battlements of Beaurepaire.

So (there's a sentence for you—there's a ring—there's earthly thunder!) the statesman dropped his statistics, and took up his hat and fled. 'Only to tell you you are in high favour, and I think you might risk a call,' said Jacintha.

'What, on the baroness?'

'Why not? We shall be obliged to let her have a finger in the pie, soon or late.'

'But I called on her, and was repulsed with scorn.'

'Ha! ha! I remember you came to offer us your highness's patronage! Well now I will tell you a better game to play at Beaurepaire than that. Think of some favour to ask us: come with your hat off. We like to grant favours: we are used to that. We don't know how to receive them.'

'But what favour can I ask?'

'Oh! anything; so that you can make it sound a favour?'

'I have it: I will ask leave to shoot over Beaurepaire.'

'Good: and that will be an excuse for giving me some more birds,' said she, who had always an eye to the pot. 'Come—forward.'

'What now? this very moment—I was not prepared for this. My heart beats at the idea.'

'Fiddle-de-dee! The baroness and the doctor are on the south terrace. But I am not to know that. I shall show you up to the baroness, and she won't be there—you understand. Run to the front door; I'll step round and let you in.'

'Madam the Baroness, here is a—young monsieur with a request—come in monsieur. But mademoiselle where is Madam the Baroness?'

'My mother is on the terrace Jacintha,' said Josephine.

'I will seek her—be seated monsieur.'

Edouard began to stammer apologies.

'Such a trifle to trouble the baroness with—and you mesdemoiselles.' 'You do not trouble us monsieur,' said Laure; 'you see we go on working as if nothing had happened.'

'That is flattering, Mademoiselle Laure.'

'But we flutter;' murmured Josephine, too low for Riviere to hear—then the kindly beauty softened down her sister's piquancy. 'Monsieur, I think I can answer for our mother that she will not refuse one whom we must always look on as—our friend.' 'But not your acquaintance,' said Edouard, tenderly, though reproachfully.

'Monsieur then cannot forgive us a single repulse.'

Here was an unexpected turn. Josephine's soft eyes and deprecatory voice seemed to imply that she might be won to retract that for which she went so near apologising.

'Jacintha is right,' thought he, 'she is the belle of belles.'

'Ah! mademoiselle,' said he warmly, 'how good you are to speak so to me!' The door opened, and the baroness came in alone.

Edouard rose and bowed. The baroness curtseyed, gravely waved him to a seat, and sat down herself. 'They tell me, monsieur, I have it in my power to be of some slight service to you—all the better.'

'Yes madam: but it is a trifle, and I am in consternation to think I should have deranged you.'

'Nowise, monsieur; I was about to come in

when Jacintha informed me of the honour you had done me. Then monsieur wishes—'

'Madam, I am a sportsman. I am a neighbour of yours madam, though I have not the honour to be known to you.'

'That arises doubtless from this, monsieur, that I so seldom go into the world,' said the lady with polished insincerity.

'Well, madam, I am a sportsman, and shoot in your neighbourhood, and the birds fly over into your ground. Now, madam, if I might follow them I should often have a good day's sport.' 'Monsieur,' said the old lady, with a faint smile, 'follow those birds wherever I have a right to invite you. I must at the same time inform you that since France was reformed, or as some think, deformed, it has not been the custom to give the lady of Beaurepaire any voice in matters of this kind.'

'Madam,' said Edouard, 'permit me to separate myself in your judgment from those persons.'

'Monsieur has done that already,' said the baroness with all the grace of the old *régime*.

Riviere bowed low. His head being down, he cast a furtive glance, and there was Josephine working with that conscious complacency young ladies mildly beam with when they are working and interested in a conversation. Laure, too was working, but her head was turned away, and she was bursting with suppressed merriment. He felt uneasy—'it is me she is quizzing'—and yet he had

a nervous desire to laugh with her; so he turned away hastily.

'Monsieur,' said the baroness languidly, 'may I, without indiscretion, ask—does it afford you much pleasure to kill these birds?'

'Not too much madam, to tell the truth—but pursuit of anything is very inviting to our nature.'

'Ah!' said Laure drily—off her guard.

'Did you speak, my daughter?' said the baroness, coldly.

'No mother,' said Laure, a little frightened; with all her sauce she dare no more put in her word, uninvited, between her mother and a stranger, than she dare jump out of the window. 'Besides,' continued Edouard, 'when a man is very hard worked, these relaxations—'

'Ah! monsieur is hard worked!' said the baroness; her eye dwelling with a delicate irony on his rosy face.

He did not perceive it: it was too subtle. He answered with a shade of pomp—'Like all who serve the State.'

'Ah! monsieur—serves — the — State.' She seemed to congeal word by word. The young ladies exchanged looks of dismay.

'I serve France,' said Riviere, gently; and something in his manner and in his youth half disarmed the old lady; but not quite—she said as she rose to conclude the interview—'Well monsieur—(you will forgive me if I cannot prevail on myself to call you citizen,')—this with ironical courtesy—

'Call me what you please, madam, except your enemy.'

And he said this with so much feeling, and this submission of the conquering to the conquered party was so graceful, that the water came into Josephine's eyes, and Laure's bosom rose and fell, and her needle went slower and slower.

'Citizens have done me too much ill,' explained the baroness, with a sombre look. 'Mamma,' said Josephine, imploringly.

'They could not have known you madam as I, even in this short interview—forgive my presumption—seem to do,' and he looked beseechingly at her.

'At least,' cried the old lady, kindly and almost gaily, 'it is a good beginning I think.' She curtseyed, and that meant 'go.' He bowed to her and the young ladies, and retired demurely: one twinkle of triumph shot out of his eye towards Laure.

The baroness turned to her daughters.

'Have you any idea who is this little Republican who has invented the idea of asking permission to shoot the partridges of another, and who, be it said in passing, has the face of an angel?'

They looked at one another. Laure spoke—'Yes mamma, we have an idea—well he is, you know—the purse.' The baroness flushed.

'And why did you not tell me children?'

'O! Mamma! it would have been so awkward for you we thought.'

'You are very considerate.'

'And we must have whispered it, and that is so ill bred.'

'More so than to giggle when I receive a visitor?' asked the baroness keenly.

'No mamma,' said Laure humbly, and the next moment she coloured all of a sudden, and the next moment after she looked at her mother, and her eyes began to fill.

'Let us compound mademoiselle,' said the baroness. 'Instead of crying because your old mother speaks more sharply than she means, which would be absurd at your age, you shall tell me why you laughed.'

'Agreed mamma,' cried Mademoiselle April, vulgarly called Laure; 'then because—he! he!—he has been shooting over your ground for two months past without leave.'

'Oh! impossible.'

'I have heard the guns, and seen him and Dard doing it. And now he has come to ask for leave with the face of an angel, as you remarked—he! he!—and oh! mamma you complimented him—he!—and he absorbed the praise with such an ingenuous gravity—ha! ha! ha! After all it is but reversing the period at which such applications are made by ordinary sportsmen—after instead of before. What does that matter?—time flies so—ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!'

'Humph!' said the baroness, and seemed very thoughtful, and mighty little amused.

Edouard went home exulting; he had inserted the wedge.

He little thought that Mademoiselle April had sacrificed him to a laugh, still less that a council of war had been convened and was even now sitting on him. Had he known this the deluded youth that went along exulting would have gone trembling and there he would have been mistaken again. Yet there are two hundred thousand people that believe a gipsy girl can predict the future. She cannot—the wisest of us cannot—angels cannot—Satan cannot, though fifty thousand of my Yankee friends have assumed as a self-evident proposition that he can.

The baroness sent for St. Aubin to ask his advice as to the best way of keeping the citizen at a distance.

The doctor listened with great interest and often smiled as the baroness put her portions of the puzzle to his portions of it, and the whole enigma lay revealed.

'Aha!' said he at last, 'the young rogue has taken me by my foible; but I will be revenged.'

'The question is not your revenge, but what I am to do.'

'Humph!' said the doctor and reflected profoundly: 'my advice is—let them alone.'

'Let them alone,' replied the baroness sharply —'that is easily said.'

'It is as easily done,' replied he quietly.

The baroness stared, and a faint flush rose in

her delicate cheek, at her friend's cool way of disposing of a question that so embarrassed her.

'TRUST TO NATURE,' continued the doctor benignantly.

'TRUST TO NATURE!' screamed the old aristocrat with horror and dismay in her face—'is the man mad?'

'No madam; nor is Nature: trust to her. She will bring the young lady and the young citizen together quite quickly enough without our inflaming them by opposition.'

'You make me regret sir, that I disturbed your graver studies for a matter so little serious as this,' was the bitter answer veiled in tones of perfect politeness.

'My friend, if you wished for the sort of advice that political prejudice or other blinding influence gives, I was indeed the wrong person to send for.'

'But,' continued the lady haughtily, not deigning to notice his last sentence, 'you will make my apologies to the spiders, to whom and their works you are, I conclude, about to return.' The doctor rose at this piece of polite insolence.

'Since you permit me, madam. I shall find Nature in spiders and admire her: but not more than I do in the young lady and the young citizen who are now submitting to her sweetest law.'

'Enough! monsieur—enough!'

'As I myself in former times, when youth—'

'As that must be very long ago, and as among the results marriage has not been one, perhaps it

would be as well to spare me the recital,' said the baroness, too spiteful to let slip this chance of a slap fair or unfair.

'True madam. Well then, let us take an unimpeachable example—as yourself—who have been married—in your younger days—not deeming the birds in spring unworthy imitation—deigned—'

'Monsieur, our conference is ended.'

The doctor went off with a malicious grin; much he cared for his old friend's grand airs and biting tongue. The only creature he stood in awe of was Jacintha, and her weapon, the duster.

'What is the hardest substance on earth?'

'Adamant, stupid.'

'No.'

'Well then steel?'

'No.'

'Platinum?'

'No. Do you give it up?—do you?—do you?—do you?—ice.'

'Ice?'

'Moral ice, not physical—not solidified water, but solidified etiquette—congealed essence of grandmamma—custom, ceremony, propriety, when down at 32 Fahrenheit.

'How many have jumped as high as they could and come down as hard as they could on purpose to break this ice—and been broken? You can try it mesdames, but not by my advice.

'By a just balance of qualities, human ice, once

broken, is the hardest thing in the world to mend.'

'Nature glides in, and keeps thawed men and women from freezing again, frozen from petrifying.' When the ladies of Beaurepaire darted from their family oak, and caught Riviere in his felonious act, they broke the ice.

Josephine's attempt to repair it on the spot was laudable but useless. It was not in nature that this young man and these two young women could ever be again the strangers they were before. Whenever they met in the park he had always a word ready, and they answered. It was but a sly word or two: but these words were like little sticks judiciously inserted as a fire burns up. Factotum Dard co-operated.

So powerful was Factotum's destiny that even when he was laid up in his arm-chair another little odd job fell upon him; he became a go-between, though unable to stir.

Lovers met—to nurse him.

First would come the two ladies, or sometimes only Laure, and curious enough in less than ten minutes Edouard was sure to arrive, very hot; it happened so—how, I have no idea; indeed it would be idle to attempt to account for all the strange coincidences that occur. Let me rather mention here, apologising for its complete irrelevance, that the young man had been puzzled what to do with the twenty pieces of gold. 'They are sacred,' said he.

But eventually he laid them out, and ten more, in a new telescope with an immensely powerful lens.

Science, by its mouth-piece St. Aubin, highly approved the purchase, and argued great things from a young man, who turned his lodgings into an observatory.

'Also a politician who looks heavenwards is not of every day occurrence,' said the dry doctor.

One day that both young ladies and Riviere met round black-foot* Dard, that worthy who had hitherto signalized himself by the depth of his silent reflections, and by listening intently to good books as read by Josephine and by swearing at his toe, rather than by any prolonged conversational efforts, suddenly announced his desire to put a few queries. The auditory prepared to sustain the shock of them.

'What I want to know is, how it happens that you aristocrats come to see me so often?'

'Oh, Dard,' said Josephine, 'don't you know?'

'No! I don't.'

'Only think of the number of little kind offices you have done for us.'

'Oh as to that, I have, by St. Denis.'

'I have myself seen you work in the garden, drive the cow, chop wood, alas! poor lad, once too often, and take fish for us out of the pond, and—'

'Stop mademoiselle, it is no use your trying to count them, Heaven has given no man fingers

* A Scotch word for a go-between: excuse the heartless pun.

enough to count my little odd jobs; much less a woman,' added he, getting confused between the jobs and the fingers.

'Well then, you see you agree with us. You have every claim on our gratitude.'

'Oh then, it is the jobs I did up at Beaurepaire that gain me these visits?'

'Yes! but above all the good heart that prompted them.'

Dard was silent a moment: then suddenly bursting out in an off-hand reckless jaunty tone—'Oh! as to that,' said he, 'I am not one of your fellows that are afraid of work. A few little jobs more or less make no difference to me. "Too much of one thing is good for nothing," as the saying goes—and "changes are lightsome."' His next observation betrayed more candour than tact. 'It was to please Jacintha I did them, not out of regard for you though.'

'What have we to do with that?' said Laure sharply—'we benefited by them: and now you shall benefit by them. Dard! if we were but a little richer we would make you so comfortable.'

'I wish you were the richest citizens in France,' said he bluntly.

Edouard walked to the gate of the Pleasance with the ladies, and talked nineteen to the dozen, to leave no room for them to say Adieu, and so get rid of him. They did not hate him for not giving them that chance. He gave the ice no time to freeze again.

And all this time he was making friends with Doctor St. Aubin: and as things will turn in this world, or rather twist, the way least expected, he got to like the doctor and greatly to admire him. He was a mine of knowledge, and his tastes were almost as wide as his information. He relished Nature more perhaps than anything else: but he was equally ready with poetry, with history, and, what charmed young Edouard, with politics of the highest order.

He made the young man see how great and rare a thing is a statesman, how common and small a thing is a place-man. He poured examples drawn from many nations and many epochs, and sounded trumpet notes of great state policy, and the patriotism it is founded on; and Riviere no sooner felt they were friends than his conscience smote him, and he said to himself, 'I will tell him all: he is a good man—a wise man—a just man. I'm not ashamed of my love. I will entreat him to be on my side.'

'My friend, I have a confession to make.'

The doctor twinkled.

'Perhaps it will not take you altogether by surprise.'

'We shall see.'

Then Edouard told his story as people tell their own stories. How he had come to this district a staunch Republican. How he had seen two young ladies walking so calm, gentle, and sad, always in black. How their beauty and grace had made

them interesting, but their misfortunes had made them sacred. How after many meetings a new feature had arisen in their intercourse; Mademoiselle Laure had smiled on him, as earth, he thought. had never smiled before. (The doctor grinned here, as many an old fellow has grinned on like occasion, mindful of the days when he was a young fool and did not know it—and now he is an old one, and doesn't know it.) This had gone through his heart. Then suppressing Jacintha, he told his friend he had learned from a sure source the family was in bitter poverty. The doctor sighed. The ardent desire to save them, coupled with the difficulty, and their inaccessibility, had almost driven him mad.

'I lost all my colour,' said he half angrily. Then he told the story of the purse, and how, after all, that attempt to save them had failed; 'and now monsieur,' he said, 'my heart often aches, and I burn and freeze by turns. I watch hours and hours for the chance of a word or a look. If I fail, I am miserable all that day; if I succeed, I am the happiest man in France for half an hour. Then I go back to my little room. It looks like a prison after that. The sun seems to have left the earth, and taken hope with him. Oh my friend, much as I love her, there are moments I wish I had never seen her. She I love will be my ruin. But I shall love her all the same; it is not her fault. I am in a fever night and day. My duties, once so pleasant, are tasteless now. Monsieur, pity me and advise me!'

'I will—tell me first, are you conscious of a slight tremor on the skin when you wake in the morning?'

'No.'

'Occasional twitches.'

'No!—yes!—how could you know that? but such trifles are not worth our attention.'

'Diagnostics are not worth our attention?'

'No, no! it's my heart!—it's my heart!'

'My young friend,' said the doctor, 'you have done well to come to me. You must do one of two things: you must either leave this district to-morrow—'

'I would rather leave the earth!'

'Or—'

'Ah! or—'

'Go with me to the baroness, and, backed by me, ask leave to court her daughter openly like a man.'

'Backed by you! am I so fortunate? are you on my side?' 'Firm as a rock!' shouted the doctor; 'and what is more I have been your secret ally, a traitor in the camp Beaurepaire, this three weeks; also I have watched your little manœuvres with me, Citizen Cherubin, with no less interest and curiosity than I watch a young bird building its first nest, or a silkworm spinning her silk, or a spider her web, or any other cunning inspired by great Nature. Oh you need not hide your head, fox with the face of the Madonna: I awaited this revelation from you: I knew it would

come. I am glad it is come so soon; a want of candour is unmanly, and a great fault in youth; you shall now learn how wise it is to be candid. Now tell me Edouard—'

'Ah! thank you, monsieur!'

'Your parents!—would they consent to a match between you and a young lady of rank but no wealth?'

'Monsieur, I am not so fortunate as to have any parents—unless you will let me look on you as one.'

'This, dear child!—I consent—my snuff box—good! left it at home.'

'I have an uncle; but you know one is not bound to obey an uncle, except perhaps—'

'When his wishes are the echo of our own—then we are.'

'Besides, my uncle loves me—at least I think so.'

'Oh! impossible. You must be mistaken. Well, my young lover, I am satisfied. All the battle, then, will be at Beaurepaire. Have you courage?'

'I am full of it; only sometimes it is the courage of hope, sometimes of despair.'

'Call on me to-morrow with the courage of hope.'

'What, at the chateau!' cried the young man, all in a flutter.

'Ay, at the impregnable castle itself, where, preposterous as it may appear, the right of receiving my visitors is conceded me. Were it not—I should take it.'

'It does me good to hear a man talk so boldly about the chateau.'

'I shall present you to my friend the baroness. She will receive you as a glacier the Polar Star.'

'I feel she will. I shiver in advance.'

'And, deaf to me, your advocate, in other words to reason and good sense personified, ahem! she will yield to you: my vanity will be shocked, and behold us enemies for life.'

Riviere shook his head despondingly—'Deaf to you, yield to me—how can this be?'

'Because she is a female of our species—a thing to be persuaded, not convinced; trust to me—have faith in nature—and come at twelve o'clock.'

St. Aubin, on reaching the chateau, found the dun pony standing at the door. He hurried into the dining room, and there was the notary and the young ladies, all apparently in good spirits. The notary had succeeded. He showed the doctor, as he had already showed the ladies, a penal contract by which Bonard bound himself not to sell the estate, or assign the loan to any one. The doctor was enchanted, shook the notary again and again by the hand, and took him up stairs to the baroness.

'There is no further necessity for concealment,' said he, 'and it would be most unjust not to give her an opportunity of thanking you.' The baroness looked rather cold and formal at sight of the notary, but her manner soon changed. Although

the doctor underrated the danger the chateau had just escaped, yet at the bare mention she turned as pale as death; both her daughters and the doctor observed this. 'Strange, I had a presentiment.'

When she found the danger was past, a deep sigh showed how the mere relation had taken away her breath.

'Heaven reward you, monsieur,' said she; 'the last time you were here, you gave me advice which offended me, probably because it was wise advice. Accept my excuses.'

'They are unnecessary, madam. I could not but respect your prejudices, though I suffered by them.'

'In future, monsieur, count on more candour, and perhaps more humility; that is should my impetuosity not deter you from ever wasting good advice on me again.'

'On the contrary, madam, if you could give me an hour to-morrow, I should be glad to show you a means by which the estate and chateau can be placed above all risk, not only from a single creditor, but from the whole body, were they to act hostilely and in concert.'

'I shall be at your disposal.'

'At this interview I request that the heiress of Beaurepaire may be also present.'

'What necessity for that?' inquired the baroness sharply.

'Oh!' said the doctor, 'I understand; the next heir's formal consent is required to arrangements

made for the benefit of the life-holder. Am I mad? to talk of the next heir. Why, Josephine is the present proprietor.'

'I!' cried Josephine with astonishment, not unmixed with horror. The notary's lip curled with contempt at the little party that had not even asked themselves to whom the property belonged. 'Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire will be present,' said the baroness.

A little before twelve o'clock, Edouard Riviere stood at the door, with something like an ice javelin running the length of his back bone. The baroness was in his eyes the most awful human creature going. He would have feared an interview with the First Consul one shade less, or half a shade. Jacintha, smiling and winking, showed him into St. Aubin's study. The doctor received him warmly, and after a few words of kind encouragement, committed him to beetles and co., while he went to intercede with the baroness.

The baroness stopped him cunningly at the first word.

'My good doctor, spare me this topic for once. The most disagreeable draught ceases to be pungent when administered every day for three weeks.'

'If you and I only were concerned in it, I would prescribe it no longer, but those we love are deeply interested in it.'

'Josephine, my daughter,' cried the baroness.

'are you deeply interested in marrying Citizen Riviere—with a face like a girl ?'

'No ! mamma !'

'We must not ask Laure, I think—she is rather too young for such topics.'

'Not a bit too young, mamma, if you please ; but I lack the inclination.'

'In short, somehow or another, you can both dispense with the doctor's friend for a husband. Let him go then. Now, if the doctor had proposed himself, we should all three be pulling caps for him.'

A little peal of laughter, like as of silver bells, rang out at the doctor's expense. He never moved a muscle. 'Permit me to recall to you the general substance of the reasons I have urged for admitting the visits of my friend Monsieur Edouard Riviere at this house.'

'A sort of *précis* or recapitulation,' remarked the baroness drily.

'Exactly.'

'Such as precedes the final dismissal of an exhausted subject.'

'Or makes the intelligent hearer at last comprehend and retain it. First and above all, this young man is good and virtuous ; then he loves with delicacy—with rare delicacy ; am I right, mesdemoiselles ? Well—I await your answer—Cowards ! !—and with ardour. He burns to do good to you all. Now, let us soberly inquire, is the family in a position to scorn such a godsend ? Some fine day, when the chateau is sold over our

heads, shall we not feel too late that imprudence is guilt in those who have the charge of beloved ones as well as of themselves. Look facts in the face, madam; comprehend to-day what all the rest of France has long comprehended, that the Bourbons are snuffed out. They were little men, whom accident placed high, and accident could lay low. This Bonaparte's finger is thicker than their loins. Well, if you can really doubt this, lean on your rotten reeds; but not with all your weight; marry one daughter to a Royalist, but one into the rising dynasty; then we shall be safe, come what may, and this ancient but tottering house will not fall in our day, or by any fault of ours.'

'This may be prudence,' said the baroness. 'I think it is; but it is prudence so hard, worldly, and cynical, that, had I known it was coming, I think I should have sent that child out of the room.' Laure cast a look of defiance at Josephine for not being called a child, and she was.

St. Aubin winced, but kept his temper.

'Show me then,' said he, 'that you can rise to things less cynical and worldly than prudence. Look at the young man's virtue—his character.'

'What do we know of his character?'

'Are we blind then, or can we see virtue only when it comes to us on paper? Is there nothing in our own souls that recognises great virtues at sight, and cries, "Hail! brother?"'

'Yes! yes! there is!' cried Laure, her eyes glowing.

'Be silent, my child.'

'Needs there a long string of scribblers to tell us what actions are good and beautiful, and beyond the little vulgar and the great vulgar to do or admire? What do you know of his character? You know that in a world which vaunts much and does nothing but egoism, sometimes bare egoism, sometimes gilt egoism, but always egoism, this poor boy has loved you all as angels love and as mortals don't, and like angels has done you good unseen. You know nothing? You know he is not rich, yet consecrated half his income to you, without hope even of thanks. Is it his fault he was found out? No! my young ladies there were too cunning for him, or you would never have known your angel friend. Read now those great Messieurs Corneille and Racine for a love so innocent, so delicate, so like a woman's, so like an angel's. Search their immortal pages for it—and find it not. Are you deaf to sentiment, blind to beauty of person and the soul? Then be shrewd, be prudent, and be friends with the rising young citizen. I have measured him—he is no dwarf. He was first at the *Ecole Politechnique*—he won't be last in France. Are you too noble to be prudent? then be noble enough to hold out the hand to the noble and good and beautiful for their own sakes, unless, after twenty years' friendship, I am anything to you; in that case, oh! welcome them for mine.'

The baroness hung her head, but made no answer.

'Mother,' said Josephine imploringly, 'the dear doctor is in earnest. I fear he may doubt our love for him if you refuse him. He never spoke so loud before. Mamma—dear mamma!'

'What is it you wish me to do, monsieur?'

'Only to receive my friend, and let him plead his own cause.'

'I consent. I am like Josephine. I do not love to have an old friend bawling at me.'

'Thank you ladies, for your consideration for my feelings—and your ears.'

'Where are you going?'

'To fetch him!'

'What to-day?'

'This minute.'

'My daughters, this was a trap. Where is he? In the Pleasance?' asked she ironically, taking for granted he was much farther off.

'No; in my room: trembling at the ordeal before him.'

'It is not too late to retreat; better so than give me the pain of dismissing him.'

'In one minute he will be with you. Break his heart if you are quite sure there is any real necessity; but at least do it gently.'

'That is understood. My child take a turn on the terrace.' Laure went out, after shaking her snowball at Josephine for being allowed to stay and she not.

'Oh! my dear friend, what a surprise I have endured! what a time you have been!'

'I have had a tough battle.'

'But you have won? your reasons have prevailed?'

'My reasons?—straws! One of them calls them so openly, I forget which. No! my reasons fell to the earth unheeded; didn't I tell you they would?'

'Oh! Heaven!'

'But, luckily, in reasoning I shouted. Then that angel Josephine said—"Oh! mother, we cannot refuse the doctor; he has shouted—he who never shouts." New definition of reason—an affair of the lungs. Now go and show them your pretty face.'

'Yes! my friend, what shall I say? what shall I say?'

'What matters it what you say? Wisdom won't help you, folly won't hurt you; still, by way of being extremely cautious, I wouldn't utter too much good sense. Turn two beseeching eyes upon her; add the language of your face to the logic of my lungs, and win—Come.'

'Madam, this is Monsieur Edouard Riviere, my friend.'

A stately reverence from the baroness.

'May my esteem and his own merit procure him at your hands favourable treatment, and should you find him timid and flurried, and little able to address you fluently, allow, I pray you, for his youth, for the modesty that accompanies merit, and

for the agitation of his heart at such a moment. I leave you.' Edouard, trembling and confused, stammered, scarcely above a whisper. 'Madam, I feel I shall need all my friend's excuses,' and here his whisper died out altogether, and his tongue seemed to glue itself to something, and lose the power of motion.

'Calm yourself monsieur: I listen to you.'

'Madam, I do not deserve her—but I love her. My position is not what she merits—but I love her.'

'How can that be monsieur?—you do not know her.'

'Ah yes madam!—I know her: there are souls that speak through the countenance: I have lived on hers too long not to know her. Say rather you do not know me—you may well hesitate to allow one unknown to come near so great a treasure. There I am sure is the true obstacle. Well madam as my merits are small let my request be moderate: give me a trial. Let me visit you—I am not old enough to be a hypocrite: if I am undeserving, such an eye as yours will soon detect me: you will dismiss me, and I shall go at a word, for I am proud too, though I have so little to be proud of.'

'You do not appear to see, monsieur, that this experiment will compromise my daughter.'

'Not at all madam; I promise it shall not; I swear I will not presume on any opportunity your goodness shall give me. Consider madam, it is only here that I can make you acquainted with my

character: you never leave the chateau madam: let me come to the chateau now and then, oh, pray let me come Madam the Baroness!' and he turned his beseeching eyes on her.

'Was ever anything so unreasonable?'

'Ah! madam the more I shall bless you if you will be so generous as not to refuse me.'

'But if it is my duty to refuse you.'

'Then I shall die madam, that is all.'

'Childishness!'

'And you will be sorry.'

'You think so!'

'O yes! for madam has a good heart—only she cannot see, and will not believe h-h-how I l-love.'

'Child! now if you cry I will send you away at once. One would say I am very cruel, but I am not—I am only in my senses, and this child is not. In the first place these things are not done in this way. The approaches are made, not by the young madman himself, but by his parents: these open the treaty with the parent or parents of the lady.'

'But madam, I am not so fortunate as to have a parent.'

'What! no father?'

'No madam. I cannot even remember my father.'

'No mother?'

'Madam she died five years ago. Mademoiselle Josephine can tell you what I lost that day. If she was alive she would be about your age. Ah

no, madam! you may be sure she is gone from me, or I should not kneel before you thus friendless. She would come to you and say—"Madam, you are a mother as I am—feel for me—my son loves your daughter; he will die if you refuse him. Have pity on me and on my son. I know him—he is not unworthy." Mademoiselle Josephine, speak a word for me I implore you; for me who, less happy than you, have no mother—for me who speak so ill, and have so much need to speak well. I shall be rejected—by my own fault—can one have so much to say and say so little? Can the heart be so full and the tongue so powerless?'

The baroness rose. She turned her head away.

Riviere awaited his doom trembling with agitation, and wishing he had said anything but what he had said; he saw too a little tremor pass over the baroness, but did not know how to interpret that.

'The emotion such words cause me—no, I cannot. My child you shall leave me now. I will send you my answer by letter.' These last words were spoken in almost a coaxing tone, in a much kinder tone than she had ever used before, and Edouard's hopes rose. 'Oh yes madam,' said he innocently, 'I prefer it so; thank you madam, from the bottom of my heart, thank you!'

He paused in the middle of his gratitude, for to his surprise the baroness's eyes suddenly became fixed with horror and astonishment. He wheeled round to see what direful object had so transfixed

her, and caught Josephine behind him, but at some distance, looking at her mother with an imploring face, a face to melt a tigress, and both her white hands clasped together in mute supplication and her cheeks wet.

When she saw herself detected, she attempted no further secrecy, but came forward her hands still clasped.

'No! no—mother!' Then she turned to Edouard. 'Do you not see she is going to refuse you by letter, because she has not the courage to look in your sweet face and strike you.' 'Ah, traitress! —traitress!' shrieked the baroness.

Edouard sighed.

Josephine stood supplicating.

'A new light strikes me,' cried the old lady—'what a horror! Why Josephine—my daughter —is it possible you are interested—to such a degree—in this—'

Josephine lowered her lovely head. 'Yes mother,' said she, just above a whisper.

The baroness groaned.

Edouard, to comfort her, began. 'But madam, it is not—'

'Ah! hold your tongue,' cried Josephine hastily. The mystified one held his tongue.

'She is right monsieur,' said the baroness, drily: 'leave her alone, she will have more influence with me than you. In a word monsieur, I am about to consult my daughter in this wise and well ordered affair. Be pleased to excuse us

a few minutes.' 'Certainly madam.' He took his hat.

'I will send for you. Meantime go and play with that other child on the terrace,' said she spitefully—for all her short-lived feeling in his favour was gone now.

Monsieur Edouard bowed respectfully, and submitted demurely to his penance.

'All is ended,' said the baroness; 'the sentiments that have corrupted the nation, have ended by penetrating into my family—my eldest daughter flings herself at a man's head—again it is not a man, but a boy—with the face of an angel.'

Josephine glided to her mother's side, and sank on her knees.

'Have some little confidence in your Josephine! Am I so very foolish? Am I so very wicked?' And she laid her cheek against her mother's. The old lady kissed her.

'Thou shalt have him—thou shalt have him! my well beloved: have no fear: thy mother loves thee too well to vex thee.' But at this the old lady began to sob and to cry—'They are taking away my children! they are taking away my children!' And to the doctor who came in full of curiosity she cried out—'Ah! you have come! enjoy then your triumph, for you have won!' 'All the better,' cried the doctor gaily.

'Nevertheless it was a sorry triumph to come to a poor old woman from whom they had taken all except her daughters, and to rob her of them too—ah!'

The doctor hung his head: then he stepped quickly up to her with great concern, and took her hand.

'My dear dear friend,' he cried, 'the laws of Nature are inevitable. Sooner or later the young birds must leave the parent's nest.'

'Nature is very cruel—oh! oh!'

'She seems so, because she is unchangeable. There is another law to which you and I must both yield ere long.'

'Yes my friend.'

'Shall we go, and leave these tender ones to choose mates and protectors for themselves, out of a world of wolves in sheep's clothing? Shall we refuse them while we live the light of our age and wisdom in this the act that is to colour their whole lives?'

'You have always reason on your side. Well! send for the young man. He is good: he will forgive me if in spite of myself I should be sometimes rude to him: he will understand that to my daughter he is a lover, but to me a burglar—a highway robber—poor child! He is very handsome all the same. Next, he has no mother—if I was not so wicked I should try and supply her place—you see I am reasonable. Tell me now how long it will be before you come to me for *Laure?* Oh! do not be afraid: I will let her go too. I will not give all this trouble a second time—the first struggle it is that tears us. Yet I knew it must come some day. But I did not expect it so soon.

No matter—I will be reasonable. To day is the fourth of November. I shall remember the fourth of November—go to. All I ask is, when they are both gone, and the house is quite—quite desolate, then suffer me to die—when all I love is gone from me. Oh! oh! oh! oh! oh!'

'Monsieur Perrin the notary is below and would speak to madam,' said Jacintha at the door.

'I remember: away with our tears my friends: here comes one who would not understand them. He would say, "what have they all the toothache at once in this house?" '

St. Aubin, after the first compliments, retired; and the notary, the baroness and Josephine seated themselves in a triangle.

He began by confessing to them that he had not overcome the refractory creditor without much trouble; and that he had since learned there was another, a larger creditor likely to press for payment or for sale of the estate. The baroness was greatly agitated by this communication: the notary remained cool as a cucumber and keenly observant.

'Bonard,' said he, 'has put this into their heads; otherwise I believe they never would have thought of it.'

He went on to say all this had caused him grave reflections. 'It seems,' said he with cool candour, 'a sad pity that the estate should pass from a family that has held it since the days of Charlemagne.'

'Now God forbid!' cried the baroness lifting her eyes and her quivering hands to heaven.

Now the notary held the Republican creed in all its branches. 'Providence, madam, does not interfere—in matters of business,' said he. 'Nothing but money can save the estate. Let us then look at things solid. Has any means occurred to you of raising money to pay off these incumbrances?'

'No. What means can there be? The estate is mortgaged to its full value: so they all say.'

'And they say true!' put in the notary quickly.

'There is no hope.'

'Do not distress yourself madam: I am here! !'

'Ah, my good friend, may Heaven reward you.'

'Madam, up to the present time I have no complaint to make of this same Heaven. By the by, permit me to show you that I am on the rise: here, mademoiselle, is a gim-crack they have given me:' and he unbuttoned his overcoat, and showed them a piece of tricoloured riband and a clasp. 'As for me, I look to the solid, I care little for these things,' said he swelling, 'but the world is dazzled by them. However I can show you something better.' He took out a letter. 'This is from the Minister of the Interior to a client of mine: a promise I shall be the next prefect, and the present prefect—I am happy to say—is on his death-bed. Thus madam your humble servant in a few short months will be notary no longer, but prefect; I shall then sell

my office of notary—it is worth one hundred thousand francs—and I flatter myself when I am a prefect you will not blush to own me.'

'Then as now monsieur,' said the baroness politely, 'we shall recognise your merit. But—'

'I understand madam: like me you look to what is solid. Thus then it is: I have money.'

'Ah! all the better for you.'

'I have a good deal of money. But it is dispersed in a great many small but profitable investments. To call it in suddenly would entail some loss.'

'I do not doubt it.'

'Never mind madam, if you and my young lady there have ever so little of that friendly feeling towards me, of which I have so much towards you, all my investments shall be called in. Six months will do it; two thirds of your creditors shall be paid off at once. A single party on whom I can depend, one of my clients who dares not quarrel with me, will advance the remaining third; and so the estate will be safe. In another six months even that diminished debt shall be liquidated, and Beaurepaire chateau, park, estate, and grounds, down to the old oak tree, shall be as free as air; and no power shall alienate them from you mademoiselle, and from the heirs of your body.' The baroness clasped her hands in ecstacy.

'But what are we to do for this monsieur?' inquired Josephine calmly, 'for it seems to me

that it can only be effected by great sacrifice on your part.'

'I thank you mademoiselle for your penetration in seeing that I must make sacrifices. I would never have told you, but you have seen it—and I do not regret that you have seen it. Madam—mademoiselle—those sacrifices appear little to me—will seem nothing—will never be mentioned, or even alluded to after this day, if you, on your part, will lay me under a far heavier obligation—if in short'—here the contemner of things unsubstantial reopened his coat, and brought his riband to light again—'if you, madam, WILL ACCEPT ME FOR YOUR SON-IN-LAW—IF YOU, MADEMOISELLE, WILL TAKE ME FOR YOUR HUSBAND!'

The baroness and her daughter looked at one another in silence.

'Is it a jest?' inquired the former of the latter.

'Can you think so, mother? Answer Monsieur Perrin. He has just done us a kind office, mother.'

'I shall remember it. Monsieur, permit me to regret that having lately won our gratitude and esteem, you have taken this way of modifying those feelings. But after all,' she added with gentle courtesy, 'we may well put your good deeds against this—this error in judgment. The balance is in your favour still, provided you never return to this topic. Come, is it agreed?' The baroness's manner was full of tact, and the latter sentences were said with an open kindliness

of manner. There was nothing to prevent Perrin from dropping the subject and remaining good friends. A gentleman, or a lover would have so done. Monsieur Perrin was neither. He said in rather a threatening tone—'You refuse me then madam ! !'

The tone and the words were each singly too much for the baroness's pride. She answered coldly but civilly,

'I do not refuse you. I do not take an affront into consideration.'

'Be calm, my mother; no affront was intended.'

'Ah! here is one that is more reasonable,' cried Perrin.

'There are men,' continued Josephine without noticing him, 'who look to but one thing, interest. It was an offer made politely in the way of business; decline it in the same spirit mother; that is what you have to do.'

'Monsieur, you hear what mademoiselle says?'

'I am not deaf madam.'

'She carries politeness a long way. After all it is a good fault. Well monsieur I need not answer you since Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire has answered you; but I detain you no longer.'

Strictly a weasel has no business with the temper of a tiger, but this one had, and the long vindictiveness of a Corsican. 'Ah! my little lady, you turn me out of the house do you?' cried he grinding his teeth.

'Turn him out of the house! what a phrase! where has this man lived?'

'To the devil with phrases. You turn me out! A man my little ladies whom none ever yet insulted without repenting it, and repenting in vain. You are under obligations to me, and you think to turn me out! You are at my mercy, and you think I will let you turn me to your door! Say again to me, either with or without phrases, "*Sortez!*" and by all the devils in less than a month I will stand here, here, here, and say to you "*Sortez!*"'

'Ah!—*mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*'

'I will say Beaurepaire is mine! Begone from it!'

When he uttered these terrible words, each of which was a blow with a bludgeon to the baroness, the old lady, whose courage was not equal to her spirit, shrank over the side of her arm chair and cried piteously—'He threatens me! he threatens me! I am frightened!' and put up her trembling hands, so suggestive was the notary's eloquence of physical violence. Then his brutality received an unexpected check. Imagine that a sparrow hawk had seized a trembling pigeon, and that a royal falcon swooped, and with one lightning-like stroke of body and wing, buffeted him away, and there he was on his back, gaping and glaring and grasping at nothing with his claws. So swift and irresistible, but far more terrible and majestic, Josephine de Beaurepaire came from her chair with one gesture of her body between her mother and the notary, who was advancing on her with arms folded in a brutal menacing way—not the Josephine we have

seen her, the calm languid beauty, but the Demoiselle de Beaurepaire—her great heart on fire—her blood up—not her own only, but all the blood of all the De Beaurepaires—pale as ashes with great wrath, her purple eyes flaring, and her whole panther-like body ready either to spring or strike. 'Slave! you dare to insult her, and before me! *Arrière, misérable!* or I soil my hand with your face!' And her hand was up with the word, up, up, higher it seemed than ever a hand was lifted before. And if he had hesitated one moment, I believe it would have come down: and if it had he would have gone to her feet before it: not under its weight—the lightning is not heavy—but under the soul that would have struck with it: but there was no need: the towering threat and the flaming eye and the swift rush buffeted the caitiff away: he recoiled three steps and nearly fell down. She followed him as he went, strong in that moment as Hercules, beautiful and terrible as Michael driving Satan. He dared not, or rather he could not stand before her: he writhed and cowered and recoiled all down the room, while she marched upon him. Then the driven serpent hissed as it wriggled away.

'For all this she too shall be turned out of Beaurepaire, not like me, but for ever. I swear it, parole de Perrin.'

'She shall never be turned out. I swear it, foi de De Beaurepaire.'

'You too daughter of Sa—'

'*Tais toi, et sors à l'instant même*—LACHE!'

The old lady moaning and trembling and all but fainting in her chair: the young noble, like a destroying angel, hand in air, and great eye scorching and withering; and the caitiff wriggling out at the door, wincing with body and head, his knees knocking, his heart panting yet raging, his teeth gnashing, his cheek livid, his eye gleaming with that hell, a buffeted coward's hate.

CHAPTER VIII.

'MADEMOISELLE, your mother has sent me here to play with you.'

'Monsieur!'

'It is true. She said, "Go and play with that other child."'

'Mesdames our mothers take liberties which we do not put up with from a stranger.'

'I felt like you at such a term being applied to me, but it is sweet to share anything with you, even an affront—a stigma.'

'So they sent you to amuse me?' asked the beauty royally.

'It appears so.'

'Whether I like or not?'

'No mademoiselle, at a word from you I was to leave you: that was understood.'

'Go away.'

'I go.'

He retired.

'Monsieur Riviere,' called the lady to him in a calm friendly tone as if nothing had happened. He came back.

'How thoughtless you are: you are going away

without telling me what you have been saying to my mother about me behind my back.'

'I never mentioned you mademoiselle!'

'Oh!—oh, all the better!'

Then this child told that child all he had said to the baroness, and her replies; and this child blushed in telling it and looked timidly every now and then to see how that capricious child took it: and that capricious child wore a lofty contemplative air, as much as to say, 'I am listening out of politeness to a dry abstract of certain matters purely speculative wherein I have no personal interest.' Certain blushes that came and went gave the requisite incongruity to the performance, and might have made an aged bystander laugh. When he came to tell Josephine's interference, and how her mother thought it was she he loved; and how Josephine, to his great surprise, had favoured the delusion; and how, on this, the tide had turned directly in his favour, our young actress being of an impetuous nature and off her guard a moment, burst out, 'Ah, I recognise you there my good Josephine!' but she had no sooner said this than she lowered her eyes and her cheek burned. Riviere was mystified.

'But mademoiselle,' said he, 'do pray explain to me—can I be mistaken after all—is she—?'

'Is she what?'

'I mean does she—?'

'Does she what?'

'You know what I mean.'

'No I do not: how should I? The vanity of these children! Now if she did would she have confessed before you that she did?'

'Well I am astonished at you Mademoiselle Laure; Jacintha then is right; you acknowledge that everything your sex says is a falsehood—oh fie!'

'No! not every thing,' replied Laure with *naïveté* unparalleled, 'only certain things! don't tease me,' cried she with sudden small violence; 'of this be sure, that Josephine was a good friend to you, not because she loves children, but because she is not one of us at all, but an angel and loves every body—even monsieur.'

'Now hear what I think,' said Edouard gravely. 'The baroness fancies you a child—you are woman enough to puzzle me, mademoiselle.'

'That may easily be.'

'And Mademoiselle Josephine thought I should not be allowed to come into the house at all, if, at that critical moment, another prejudice came in the way.'

'What prejudice?'

'That you are to young to love.'

'That is no prejudice—it is a fact. I am, monsieur—I am *much* too young.'

'No! I was confused. I mean too young to be loved.'

'Oh! I am not too young for that—not a bit too young.'

'And so the angel Josephine temporized, out of

pity to me: that is my solution, and—ah! Heaven bless her!'

'Forgive me if I say your solution is a very absurd one.'

'It is the true one.'

'Are you sure?'

'Positive.'

'Then it is no use my contradicting you.'

'Not the least.'

'Then I shall not contradict you.'

'Ah well! perhaps my turn will come,' said the young man, his lips trembling. 'Won't I cut myself in pieces for her at a word, that is all.'

'I like you better when you talk so.'

'Mademoiselle Laure?'

'Monsieur Edouard?'

'If you will come to where the great oak tree stands:'

'To the Pleasance you mean?'

'Oh! the Pleasance is it? What lovely names every thing has here! Well, if you will come into the Pleasance I will make you a drawing of that dear old tree I love so.'

'And what right have you to love it?—it is not yours: you are always loving something you have no business to.'

'I love things that one can't help loving—is that a crime?'

'He can't help loving a tree, tender nature!'

'No, I can't help loving a tree out of which you introduced yourself to me.'

'Insolent! Well, draw it with two ladies flying out and a boy rooted with terror.'

'There is no need. That scene is more than drawn, it is engraved, on all our memories for ever!'

'Not on mine! not on mine! Oh! how terrified you were—ha! ha!—and how terrified we should have been if you had not. Listen: once upon a time—don't be alarmed: it was after Noah—a frightened hare ran by a pond: the frogs splashed into the water in terror. She said, "Ah ha! there are then those I frighten in my turn: I am the thunderbolt of war." Excuse my quoting La Fontaine: I am not in "Charles the Twelfth of Sweden" yet. I am but a child.'

'And I am glad of it, for when you grow up you will be too much for me, that is evident. Come then mademoiselle the quizzer.'

'Monsieur, shall I make you a confession? You will not be angry: I could not support your displeasure.'

'I am afraid you could: so I will not try you.'

'Then I have a strange inclination to walk up and down this terrace while you draw that tree in the Pleasance.'

'Resist that inclination: perhaps it will fly from you.'

'No! you fly from me, and draw. I will rejoin you in a few minutes.'

'Thank you! Not so stupid!'

'Do you doubt my word, sir?' asked she haughtily.

'Heaven forbid mademoiselle! only I did not see at first that it was a serious promise you are doing me the honour to make me. I go.'

He went and placed himself on the west side of the oak and took out his sketch-book, and worked zealously and rapidly. He had done the outlines of the tree and was finishing in detail a part of the huge trunk, when his eyes were suddenly dazzled: in the middle of the rugged bark, deformed here and there with great wart-like bosses, and wrinkled, seamed, and ploughed all over with age, burst a bit of variegated colour: bright as a poppy on a dungeon wall, it glowed and glittered out through a large hole in the brown bark; it was Laure's face peeping. To our young lover's eye how divine it shone! None of the half tints of common flesh were there, but a thing all rose, lily, sapphire, and soul. His pencil drooped, his mouth opened, he was downright dazzled by the glowing, bewitching face, sparkling with fun in the gaunt tree. Tell me, ladies, did she know the value of that sombre frame to her brightness? Oh! no—she was only a child!!!!! The moment she found herself detected, the gaunt old tree rang musical with a crystal laugh, and out came the arch-dryad. 'I have been there all the time. How solemn you looked!—ha! ha! Now for the result of such profound study.' He showed her his work; she altered her tone.

'Oh! how clever,' she cried, 'and how rapid! What a facility you have! Monsieur is an artist,'

said she gravely; 'I will be more respectful,' and she dropped him a low curtsey. 'Mind you promised it me,' she added sharply.

'You will accept it, then?'

'That I will, now it is worth having: I never reckoned on that—hence my *nonchalance*. Finish it directly,' cried this peremptory young person.

'First I must trouble you to stand out there near the tree.'

'What for?'

'Because I want a contrast. The tree is a picture of Age and gradual decay; by its side then I must place a personification of Youth and growing loveliness.'

She did not answer, but made a sort of pirouette, and went where she was bid, and stood there with her back to the artist. 'But that will not do, mademoiselle; you must turn round.'

'Oh! very well.' And when she came round, he saw her colour was high. Flattery is sweet.

This child of nature was pleased, and ashamed it should be seen that she was pleased—and so he drew her; and kept looking off the paper at her, and had a right in his character of artist to look her full in the face: and he did so with long lingering glances beginning severe and business-like, and ending tender, that she poor girl hardly knew which way to look not to be scorched up by his eye like a tender flower, or blandly absorbed like the pearly dew. Ah! happy hour! ah!

happy days of youth, and innocence, and first love!

'Here is my sister. Something is the matter!'

Josephine came towards them, pale and panting.

'Oh! my children,' she cried, and could not speak a moment for agitation. They came round her in anxiety.

'A great misfortune has fallen on us, and I am the cause.'

'Oh! Heaven!'

'We have an enemy now, a deadly enemy. Perrin the notary; Laure—Monsieur—he insulted us—he insulted my mother—I could not bear that—I insulted *him*.'

'You, Josephine?'

'Yes! you may well wonder. How little we know ourselves! but our mother was trembling in her chair, her noble, her beloved face all pale—all pale—and she put up her hands before her sacred head, for the ruffian was threatening her with his loud voice and brutal gesture.'

'*Sacr-r-ré canaille!*—and I not there!'

'Then in a moment, I know not how, I was upon him, and I cried, "Back, wretch!"'

'Well done.'

'With my hand over his head. Oh! if he had faced me a moment, I should struck him with all my soul, and in the face. I should have killed him. I was stronger than lions, and as fierce. I was not myself. I knew no fear; I who now am

all fear again. It was but a single coward—had it been a regiment of braves, I should have flung myself upon them—for my mother. Mad woman that I was!'

'You noble creature—you goddess—I only loved you, and honoured you—now I adore you.'

'Oh! Edouard, you do not see what my violence has done. Alas! I who love my sister so, have ruined her. I have ruined the mother I tried to protect. I have ruined the house of Beaurepaire. For that shrinking coward has the heart of a fiend. He told us he had never forgiven an affront—and he holds our fate in his hands. "You turn me out of the room," he yelled, (I turn cold now when I think of his words,) "I will turn you out of the room, and out of the house as well. You stand here and say to me '*Sortez!*' In a little while I will stand here—here, and say to you '*Sortez!*'" He will do it. It is written in my heart, so hot with rage a moment ago, so cold with terror now—he will do it—he will come armed with the law—the iron law—and say to us poor debtors—"*Sortez!*"'

'And if he does,' said Edouard firmly, and cutting each word with his clenching teeth, 'this is what will happen. I will cut his liver out with my dog whip before you all, and you will not go at all.'

'That is spoken like a man!' cried Laure warmly.

'You talk like a child, said Josephine. 'Yet

perhaps you might do something. Will you do something for me?'

'Did you do nothing for me to-day that you put such a question?'

'We will not speak of that, my friend.'

'No,' cried the boy, trembling with emotion, 'we will not talk of it; these are not things to *talk* of; but we will—' And for lack of words he seized upon both her hands and kissed them violently, and then seized her gown and kissed that.

'You know Bonard the farmer—he lives about a league from this,' asked Josephine.

'Yes! yes!'

'Run thither across the meadows, and find out whether Perrin has been to him since leaving the chateau. He has only a few minutes' start; you will perhaps arrive before he leaves.'

'Before he leaves! I shall be there before him. Do you think a dun cow can carry a scoundrel towards villainy as fast as I can go to please an angel?'

'You will come back to Beaurepaire and tell me?'

'Yes! yes!' and he was gone.

The sisters followed slowly to the gate and watched the impetuous boy run across the park.

'He does not take the path.'

'Oh!' said Laure, 'what are paths to him. He has no prejudice in favour of beaten tracks. He is going the shortest way to Bonard, that we may be sure of.'

'How gallantly he runs, Laure; how high he holds his head; how easily he moves; and yet how he clears the ground—already at the edge of the park.'

'Yes, but Josephine, the strong bramble hedge—there is no gap there—no stile. What will he do? Ah!'

Edouard had solved the riddle of the hedge; by a familiar manœuvre unknown to those ladies until that moment, he increased his pace and took a flying leap right at the hedge, but, turning in the air, came at it with his back instead of his face, and, by his weight and impetus, burst through Briareus in a moment, and was next seen a furlong beyond it. The girls looked at one another. Josephine smiled sadly. Laure looked up hopefully.

'All our lives we have thought that hedge a barrier no mortal could pass—he didn't make much of it. Have courage then, sister.'

'Laure, go in and comfort our mother.'

'Yes, my sister—alone? Where are you going?'

'To the oratory.'

'Ah! you are right.'

'Oh! Laure, the blessing and the comfort of believing the God of the Fatherless is stronger than wicked men. Dark days are coming my sister.'

Laure tried to comfort her mother; the consoling topic she chose was young Riviere. She

described his zeal, his determination to baffle the enemy, how, she did not know, but she was sure he would somehow; and, to crown all, his jumping through the hedge.

The baroness listened like a wounded porcupine round whom a fly buzzes. The notary was her wound; the statesman her worrying fly. When her patience was exhausted, she lashed out against him. Now, capricious imps, whom their very nature seems to impel to tease and flout, and even quarrel with a lover to his face, are balanced by another strong impulse—viz., to defend him behind his back, ay with more spirit than those do who have more loving natures. Perhaps they feel they owe him this reparation. Perhaps to abuse him is to infringe their monopoly, and they can't stand that.

Laure defended Edouard so warmly, that, between her mother's sagacity and her own vexation at his being sneered at by anybody but her, and also at her being called once or twice in the course of the argument by the hateful epithet 'a child,' it transpired she was the young lady Edouard came to Beaurepaire for. The baroness was so shocked at this that Laure repented bitterly her unguarded tongue. 'Oh mamma! don't look so—pray, don't look so! Mamma dear, be angry again, do pray be very angry: but don't look so at your Laure. I could not help growing up. I could not help being like you mamma. So then they call that being pretty, and come teasing me. But I am not

obliged to love him mamma, do pray remember that. I don't care for him the least in the world, not as I do for you and Josephine, and if he brings dissension here I shall hate him! ah yes! you could easily make me hate him—poor boy!'

'I was wrong; it is a weakness of parents never to see that their children are young women.'

'I am nineteen and a half, mother, and he is only twenty-one. So, you see, it is very natural.'

'Yes! it is very natural—there, go and tell the doctor all that has happened this miserable day; for I am worn out—quite worn out. Let me have some one of my own age to talk to. Ah! how unhappy I am!'

Never since our story commenced did a sadder gloomier party sit round the little table and its one candle in the corner of that vast saloon.

Josephine filled with gloomy apprehensions, and accusing herself of the ruin of the family. The doctor sharing her anxieties and bitterly mortified at the defeat of reason and St. Aubin: at having been deceived by a notary in sheep's clothing. Laure sad, for now for the first time they were not all united in opinion, as well as in trouble, and she herself the cause. The baroness in a state of prostration, and looking years older than in the morning.

'You are worn out madam,' said the good doctor; 'let me persuade you to retire to rest a little earlier than usual.'

'No my friend, I want to sit and look at you all

a little longer. Who knows how long we shall be together ?'

There was a heavy silence.

Laure whispered to Josephine—'Tell our mother she can dismiss him whenever she pleases : it is all one to me.'

'No ! no !' said Josephine, 'that is not what she is thinking of. She is right : I have ruined you all.' 'Monsieur Riviere,' cried Jacintha : and a moment after the young man shone in the door-way.

'Is this an hour—?' began the baroness.

'He comes by my request,' whispered Josephine hastily.

'That is a different thing.'

Edouard came down the saloon with a brisk step and a general animation, and joined the languid group like a sunbeam struggling into thick fog. He bowed all round.

'Mademoiselle, he has been there. As I jumped over the last stile, that dun pony trotted into the yard ; I say, how he must have spurred him.'

Josephine, who had risen all excited to hear his report, sat down again with a desponding mien.

'I waited in ambush to see what became of him. He was with the farmer a good hour—then he went home. I followed him ; but I did nothing—you understand—because I had not precise orders from you : but I went hence, and got my dog whip —here it is : whenever you give the word, or hold up your little finger to that effect, it shall be applied, and with a will '—crack ! and the ex-school

boy smacked his whip, meaning to make a little crack, but it went off like a pistol shot.

'Ah!' cried the baroness, and nearly jumped out of her seat. Edouard was abashed. 'The young savage!' said Laure, and smiled approvingly.

'It is no question of dog whips,' objected St. Aubin with dignity.

'And the man is enough our enemy without our giving him any real cause to hate us,' remonstrated Josephine.

'We shall not be here long,' muttered the baroness gloomily.

'Forgive me if I venture to contradict you madam.'

'We are ruined—and no power can save us.'

'Yes madam, there is one who can.'

'Who can save me now?' asked the baroness with deep despondency.

'I! if you will permit me.'

This frantic announcement took them so by surprise that they had not even the presence of mind to exclaim against its absurdity, but sat looking at one another.

The statesman took advantage of their petrifaction, and began to do a little bit of pomposity. 'Madam the Baroness, and you monsieur, who have honoured me with your esteem, and you Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire whom I adore, and you Mademoiselle Laure whom I—whom I hope to be permitted—whom I—listen all. You have this day done me the honour to admit me to an

intimacy I have long sought in vain : let me then this day try to make you some small return, and to justify in some degree Monsieur St. Aubin my kind advocate. Madam, it is your entire ignorance of business, and unfortunate neglect of your property, that make you fancy yourself ruined.'

The baroness smiled bitterly. Then her head drooped.

'Let us come to facts. You are living now upon about one thousand two hundred francs a year : the balance of your rents after the interest of your loans is paid.'

Oh !—and they were astounded and terrified at his knowledge of their secret, and blushed in silence for their poverty.

'Your real balance, after paying your creditors is—that is, ought to be—five thousand two hundred francs. Your farms are let a good forty per cent. below their value : your tenants are of two classes—those who never had any leases, and those whose leases have long been run out. The tenants are therefore in your power, and whenever you can pluck up resolution to have your real income, say the word and I will get it you.'

'Monsieur, you are right, I understand little of business ; but this I know, that the farms are let too high, not too low. They all say so.'

'Who says so madam ?'

'They who should know best—the tenants themselves. Two of their wives came here last week and complained of the hard times.'

'What! the smooth-faced cheats, the liars whose interest it is to chant that tune. Give me better evidence.'

'That man, the notary—he said so. And in that point at least I see not what interest—'

'You — don't — see—what—interest—he has!' cried Edouard.

'*On me coupe la parole*,'* said the fine lady dolefully, looking round with an air of piteous surprise on them all.

'Forgive me madam: zeal for you boiled over; but now *is* it possible you don't see what interest that *canaille* of a pettifogger has?'

'What phrases!'

'In humbugging you on that point!'

'It is a whole vocabulary!!!'

'Blame the things and the people, not me madam, since I do but call both by their true names.' 'Which if not so polite as to call them by other names, is more scientific,' suggested St. Aubin.

'Madam, pray see the thing as it is, and if you insist on elegant phrases, well then; Beaurepaire is a dying kid that all the little ravens about here are feeding on, and all the larger vultures, or Perrins, are scheming to carry away to their own nests. The estate of Beaurepaire is the cream of the district. The first baron knew how to choose land; perhaps he took the one bit of soil on which he found something growing by the mere force of

* He takes the words out of my mouth.

nature, all being alike uncultivated in that barbarous time; it is a rich clay watered by half a dozen brooks. Ah! if you could farm it yourself as my uncle does his, you might be wealthy in spite of its encumbrances.'

'Farm it ourselves! Is he mad?'

'No, madam; it is not I who am mad. Why if you go to that it requires no skill to deal with meadow land, especially such land as yours, in which the grass springs of itself. "*Fundit humo facilem victum justissima tellus*," doctor. There, I will back Jacintha to farm it for you, without spoiling the dinner. She has more intelligence than meadow land asks. In that case your income would be twelve thousand francs a-year. The very idea makes you ill. Well I withdraw it: and there go seven thousand francs per annum; but the three thousand francs I must and will force upon you for the young ladies' sake; and justice's and common sense's—do you consent? Monsieur, the baroness is ill—she does not answer me! her lips are colourless! Oh what have I done? I have killed her by my *brusquerie*.'

'It is nothing my child,' said the baroness faintly: 'too much trouble—too much grief'—and she was sinking back in her chair, but Laure's arm was already supporting her, and Josephine holding salts to her.' 'It is fatigue,' said the doctor. 'The baroness should have retired to rest earlier, after so trying a day.'

'He is right my children. At my age ladies

cannot defy their medical adviser with impunity. Your arm my youngest,' and she retired slowly, leaning upon Laure. This little shade of preference was a comfort to Laure after the shortlived differences of the day, and Josephine, it would seem, did not think it quite accidental, for she resisted her desire to come on her mother's other side, and only went slowly before them with the light.

On the young ladies return they were beset with anxious inquiries by Edouard. St. Aubin interrupted them.

'They will not tell you the truth,' said he, 'perhaps they do not even know it. It is partly fatigue, partly worry: but these would not kill her so fast as they are doing—if—if—her food was more generous—more—more nutritious!' and the doctor groaned. 'Oh! doctor,' cried Laure, 'we give her the best we have.'

'I know you do, little angel, but you give her delicacies—she wants meat; you give her spiced and perfumed slops—she wants the essence of soup; and what are grapes, and apples, and pears, and peaches?—water: what are jellies?—sticky water, water and glue, but not fibre: what are salads?—water: what are nearly all vegetables? ninety-six parts in the hundred water; this has been lately proved by analysis in Paris, by a friend of mine. Nature is very cunning, she disguises water with a hundred delicious flavours: and then we call it food. Farina and flesh are food: the

rest are water, air, nothing. The baroness is at an age when people ought to eat little at a time, but often, and only sovereign food.' 'She shall have it from this day,' cried Edouard. 'Let us conspire.'

'Oh, yes,' cried Laure, 'let us conspire!'

'Let us be kinder to her than she will ever be to herself. You saw how prompt she was to oppose my plans for baffling her enemies? Let us act without her knowledge.'

'But how?'

'Let me see. First let us think of her health.'

'Ah! thank you Edouard,' cried Josephine warmly.

'Well then we must begin thus. One of you young ladies must ask to be allowed to manage the household matters. You can say you wish to prepare yourself for the day when you shall yourself be mistress of an establishment. Perhaps, Mademoiselle Laure, you would make the proposal?'

'Me! I shall never be mistress of an establishment,' said Laure, dolefully and pettishly. She added, in quite a different key, 'I do not mean to: I would not for the world.'

'What a violent disclaimer,' said Josephine; 'it will be best for me to make the proposal. I will be apparent mistress of the house, but as Laure rules me in all things, she will be the real mistress. Will you meet my friend's views?'

'Provided she can be got to obey me,' was

Edouard's answer. 'May I ask for another candle?' The bell was rung. 'Another candle, Jacintha.'

Meantime, Edouard, too eager to wait for anything long, took out of his pocket a map, and spread it all over the table: Jacintha came in, and being tormented with curiosity, took a long time lighting the candle, with a face made stolid for the occasion.

'Now you all know what this is a map of?'

'No!' said Laure, 'it is not France; but what country it is I don't know.'

'Oh fie! Jacintha knows I'll be bound. What map is this, Jacintha?'

'It is Italy,' replied Jacintha firmly, and without any of that hesitation which in some minds accompanies entire ignorance of a subject. Edouard groaned.

'Well, I did think *she* would have known Beaurepaire when she saw it.' Jacintha tossed her head incredulously.

'How can it be Beaurepaire? Beaurepaire is in Brittany, and this country is bigger than Brittany. Brittany is down stairs.' 'Ah!' cried Laure, 'here is the chateau!'

'Saints preserve us, so it is, mademoiselle, I declare, and here is the park, and two ladies walking in it, but I don't see monsieur: nevertheless he is as often there as you are mesdemoiselles.'

'What an unfortunate omission!' said Laure ironically.

'I am glad you think so: it is easily supplied,'

and with his pencil he rapidly inserted a male figure walking with the ladies, and its body paying them a world of obsequious attention. Jacintha retired with a grin. The map was warmly admired.

'Oh, I used always to get a prize for them at the Polytechnic.' 'And so beautifully coloured: but what are all these names?' said Josephine, 'the Virgin's Coppice? I never heard of that.' 'Oh! oh!' exclaimed Edouard, 'she never heard of the Virgin's Coppice—what is it? why it is a sort of marsh: I shot a brace of snipes in it the other day.'

'But you have not painted any trees on it to show it is a coppice.'

'Trees? there is not a tree in it and has not been this two or three hundred years.'

'Then why do we call it a coppice still?'

'I don't know: all I know is, there are snipes in it—no small virtue.'

Laure.—'The Deer Park—I never heard of that.'

Edouard (lifting up his hands).—'They don't know their own fields: the Deer Park is a ploughed field not far from Dard's house, which you may behold. Now give me your attention.' The young man then showed them the homesteads of the several tenants, and pointed out the fields that belonged to each farm, and the very character of the soil of each field. They gazed at him in half stupified wonder, and at the mass and precision of

his knowledge on a subject where they were not only profoundly ignorant, but had not even deemed knowledge accessible to ladies and gentlemen. He concluded by assuring them, that he had carefully surveyed and valued every field on the estate, and that the farms were let full forty per cent. below their value. 'Now mesdemoiselles, your mother has a claim upon the estate for her jointure, but you are the true proprietors.'

'Are we?'

'Oh! gracious Heavens, they did not even know who their estate belonged to. Well, give me an authority, on this paper, to act as your agent, or we shall never get our forty per cent. Neither you nor your mother are any match for these sheep-faced rustics—leeches who have been sucking your blood this fifty years—crying hyenas that have been moaning and whining because they could not gnaw your bones as well.'

'My friend,' said Josephine, 'I would do this with pleasure, but mamma would be so hurt, it is impossible.'

'Mademoiselle—Josephine—you saw how your mother received my proposals for her good and yours. Consider, I am strong enough to defeat your enemies—provided I have none but enemies to battle: but if I am to fight the baroness and her prejudices as well as Perrin and the tenants, then failure is certain, and I wash my hands of it.'

'But consider, impetuous boy, we cannot defy our mother, whom we love so.'

'Defy her? no! But you need not go and tell her everything you do.'

'Certainly not. You know, doctor, we kept from her Bonard's threat till the danger seemed passed.'

'And we did well,' cried Laure; 'think if she had known what was hanging over her all that time!'

'What do you say, doctor?' asked Josephine.

'I don't know, my dear. It is a hard alternative. As a general rule I don't like deception.'

'I do not propose deception,' said the young man blushing; 'only a wise reticence; and without this reticence, this reserve, even my plan for improving her diet must fail.'

'In that case I take the sin of reticence on me. I claim the post of honour!' cried Laure with great agitation and glistening eyes.

'I consent!' exclaimed Josephine; 'this child so young, so pure, cannot be wrong.' 'All I know is,' said the doctor, 'that the more roast meat she has, and the less worry, the longer my poor friend will live.'

'Give me the paper Edouard, we will both authorize you—and thank you for letting us.'

'Yes! yes! and we will do whatever he advises us, that is, you shall—I'll see about it.'

'And oh! doctor,' said Josephine, 'what a comfort it is to have some one about us who has energy and decision, and, above all, takes the command!'

The next day Edouard came into the kitchen and adopted Jacintha into the conspiracy: consulted her how to smuggle nutriment into the baroness, and bar the tenants from all access to her for a while. He told her why.

'*Canaille* of tenants,' she cried, 'this then has been your game all these years: good—wait till the next of you comes here pulling a long face—crocodiles, I'll tell you my mind!'

'No! no! they would say it was you who kept us from the baroness, and they would write to her or try a dozen artifices to gain her ear.'

'You are right, my son: I was stupid: no, it shall be diamond cut diamond, I'll meet them with a face as smooth as their own, and say to them—what shall I say to the *canaille?*'

'Say the baroness in her failing state sees no one on business: say she has made over the control of the property to her daughters and their agent: —add that—ahem—she is dying!'

'Yes! that is the best of all to say, but stay, no —it is not lucky. Perhaps in that case she will die, and I shall have killed her.'

'Stuff! people don't die to make other people's words good, that would be too stupid: cut me forty bunches of grapes.' Jacintha looked rueful.

'My dear it is not for me to deny you.'

'I don't ask you to deny me.'

'Well, but forty bunches!' 'Order from the mistress!' said the young man pompously drawing out a paper.

'*Jacintha, do whatever Monsieur Riviere bids you!*

'JOSEPHINE DE BEAUREPAIRE.'

'Well, to be sure. I say you have not lost much time. At least tell me what you want forty bunches of grapes for?' Before he could answer came a clatter, and a figure hopped in with a crutch.

'Why Dard! a sight of you is good for sore eyes. Who would have thought you could have got so far as this?'

'I am going farther than this. I am going down to the town to sell your grapes, and such like belly vengeance, and bring back grub—aha!'

'Oh, that is the game, is it my lads?'

'That, and no other,' replied Dard.

'If the baroness comes to hear of it won't you catch it, that is all!'

'But she never will hear of it unless you tell her.'

'Oh! I shan't tell her. I durstn't. She would faint away. Here is a down-come. Selling our fruit. Ah! well a day. What is Beaurepaire coming to?'

'Will you go and cut them?' cried Riviere, stamping with impatience. 'Well, I am going,' snapped Jacintha.

Dard had got a little cart outside, and his grandmother's jackass. 'Citizen, if you will bring the hampers out of my cart into the garden, I will help

her cut the fruit: it is all I am fit for at the present. I am no longer a man. Behold me a robin redbreast, hop-ping a-bout!'

'We may as well be killed for a sheep as a lamb,' said Jacintha dolefully. 'I have pulled a few dozen peaches. It is a highway robbery. They would have rotted on the tree. Oh Dard! you won't ever let the folks know where they come from?'

'No, no! he has got his lessons from me.'

'What would they say if they knew? Why, that we are at our last gasp! Selling our very fruit off our walls!' and the corner of her apron was lifted to her eye. 'You great baby,' cried Edouard; 'don't you see this is the beginning of common sense, and proper economy, and will end in riches?' Dard shrugged his shoulders. 'Reason is too good a thing to waste: let her snivel!'

'Now Dard,' said Jacintha cheerfully, 'what I want *most* is some lard, some butter, some meal, a piece of veal, a small joint of mutton, and a bit of beef for soup; but a little chocolate would not be amiss, our potatoes are very short, and you can bring up some white beans, if you see any good ones.' 'Nothing more?' inquired Dard.

'Yes. Was I mad? Coffee is wanted most dismally.'

'Buy it if you dare!' cried Riviere. 'No, Dard, that is my affair, and mine alone.' Presently there was a fresh anxiety. Dard would be recognised, and, by him, the folk would know out of what

garden came his merchandise. 'All is provided for,' said Edouard. 'Dard embellish thyself.'

Dard drew out of his pocket a beard and put it on.

'Is he Dard now?'

'My faith no!'

'Is he even human?'

'Not too much so, ha! ha!—well Beaurepaire is alive since you come into it my *gaillard!*'

'Now you know,' said Dard, 'if I am to do this little job to-day, I must start.'

'Who keeps you!'

Thus these two loved.

Edouard had no sooner embellished, primed, and started Dard by fencing with a pointed stick at his jackass, which like a ship was a good traveller but a coy starter, than he went round to all the tenants with St. Aubin. He showed them his authority, and offered them leases at forty per cent. advance on the present rent. They refused to a man.

Most of them had been about to propose a reduction, but had forborne out of good feeling towards the baroness. And that same feeling would perhaps give them the courage to go on under the burden a year or two longer, but as for advancing the rent a sou—never!!

Others could not be got to take a grave view of so merry a proposal. They were all good humour with satire underneath at the jolly audacity of proposing to raise the Beaurepaire rents: with one and all Riviere was short and clear. 'There is

my card: the leases await you at my house: you must come and sign in three days!'

'And if I should happen not to come my little monsieur?'

'A writ of ejectment will be served on you before sunset of the third day. Adieu!'

'All the better for me,' sang out one as Edouard retired. The doctor was discouraged.

'This universal consent surely goes to prove—'

'That they have a common interest in deceiving.'

'You are very young to think so ill of men.'

'I have been months in a government office. Monsieur I have seen men too near: I left the Polytechnic with illusions about honesty and sincerity among men—puff!—they are gone.'

'Are they? then accursed be the hour you ever saw a government office.'

'No, no: but for my experience under government I should not be sharp, and if I was not sharp I could not serve our sacred cause.'

'Still at your age to have lost all confidence in men and women!'

'I beg your pardon,' cried the misanthropist eagerly, 'not in women: they have none of the vices of men; no selfishness, no heartlessness. I see in them some little tendency to fib—I mean in the uneducated ones! but dear me, their fibs are so innocent. Women!! we men are not worthy to share the earth with them.' The doctor smiled. For the last thirty or forty years he had no longer

been able to see this prodigious difference between the sexes. 'And can all these honest male faces be deceiving us?' asked he.

'Honest! What? because they are round! Well, I too, used to picture to myself a sharper with a sharp face—eyes close together—foxy: but I soon found your true Tartuffe is the round-visaged or square-faced fellow. He seems a lump of candour: he is a razor keen and remorseless. There are no better actors in the *Théâtre Français* than these frank peasants. You will see. Good-bye; I must run to the town for drafts of leases, Mocha coffee, and writs of ejectment.'

There were in the little town in question two notaries, Perrin and Picard, on good terms with each other outwardly.

Though young and impetuous, and subject to gusts of vanity, Edouard was not so shallow as to despise an enemy of whom he knew nothing, but that he was a lawyer. No. He said to himself—'We have a notary against us. I must play a notary.' He went to Picard, and began by requesting him to draw up seven agreements for leases, and to have ready three or four writs of ejectment. Having thus propitiated the notary by doing actual business with him, he began cautiously to hint at the other notary's enmity to Beaurepaire. 'You surprise me,' said Picard, 'I really think you must be mistaken. Monsieur Perrin owes all to that family. It was the baron who launched him. How often have I seen him,

when a boy, hold the baron's horse, and be rewarded by a silver coin. Oh! no, Monsieur Perrin is a man that bears a fair character: I cannot believe this of him.'

This defence of his competitor looked so like an asp in a basket of figs, that Edouard hesitated no longer, but gave him the general features of the case, and went by rapid gradations into a towering passion. Picard proposed to him to be cool. 'I cannot,' said he, 'enter into your feud with Perrin for the best of all reasons: I do business with him.' Edouard looked blank. 'He is also a respectable man.' Edouard looked blanker.

'But, on the other hand, you are now my client, monsieur, and he is not my client. You understand?'

'Perfectly. You are an honest man,' cried Edouard not stopping to pick his epithets, and seized the notary's hand, and shook it: it let itself be shaken, and was in that and other respects like cold jelly. Its owner invited him to tell the whole story. 'Never have any reserves with your notary,' said he severely; 'that is the grand folly of clients: and then they come and blame us if we make a mistake: they forgot that it is they who mislead us.'

On this theme he rose to tepid. He dwelt on this abominable practice of clients till Edouard found out that lawyers are the worst-used people living.

But who is not that?

When he was gone, Picard went into his clerk's room and gave him an order to draw up agreements for leases, leaving blanks for the names: then he added—

'What do you think? The rascal is scheming to get hold of Beaurepaire now.'

'Is it possible? But it is just like him.'

'But I'll put a spoke in his wheel.'

Josephine was now household queen at Beaurepaire; Laure viceroy over her. This young lady was born to command, and Nature prevailed over seniority. The young statesman elected himself prime minister to the lady-lieutenant; and so great was his deference to her judgment, even on points where she was unfathomably ignorant, that he was for ever seeking grave conferences with her.

The leading maxim with them all was that the baroness was on no account to be worried or alarmed, nor her prejudices shocked; where these stood between her comfort, and her own friend's plans for that comfort, the governing powers made a little *détour* and evaded collisions with them.

For instance, the baroness would never have consented to sell a Beaurepaire grape. She would have starved sooner, or lived on the grapes; if diarrhœing can be called living. So when she demanded of Queen Josephine how there came such an influx of beef, mutton, and veal into the chateau. Lieutenant Laure explained that Edouard had begged Josephine to give him some fruit that was rotting on the walls, and she had consented.

'It seems mamma that these government officers interchange civilities with the tradespeople. So he made presents of fruit to those he deals with, and they sent him in return—he! he!—specimens of their several arts. And he never dines at home now, but always here. So he sent them over, and do you know I think it is as well he did, for that boy eats like a wolf, doesn't he Josephine?'

'Yes love. What did you say dear? I was full of my thoughts, my forebodings.'

'Then what right had you to say "yes?"'

'Because it was you who appealed to me, sister.'

'No, no, no! it is your nature to say that silliest of words—that is why.'

The baroness took no notice of this byetalk.

'I should not like *him* not to have enough,' said she with some hesitation. In short Doctors Laure and Josephine so gilded the meat pills that the baroness swallowed them, and was none the worse for them, actually.

Another day dead chickens flooded the larder.

'Mamma, come and see what the tenants have sent us!'

'The good souls! and these are the people whose rents he talked of raising.'

'Who minds what he says mamma—a young madman!'

Another fine day it rained eggs. These too were fathered upon the tenants. Hope then to escape false accusations!!

In these and many other ways they beguiled

the old lady for her good. The baroness was not to see or hear anything but what she would like to see and hear.

'Do not deceive her unnecessarily. But deceive her rather than thwart or vex her.'

This was the leading maxim of the new Queen-craft and all played their part to perfection—none better than Jacintha, who, besides a ready invention and an oily tongue, possessed in an eminent degree the *vultus clausus* of the Latins—*volto sciolto* of their descendants: in English, a close face. And though they entered on this game with hesitation, yet they soon warmed in it. The new guile was charming. To defraud a beloved one of discomfort—to cheat her into a good opinion of all she wished to think well of—to throw a veil, of silver tissue of innocent fibs, between her and trouble—to smuggle sovereign food into her mouth and more sovereign hope into her heart. Pious frauds! and many a holy man has justified these in writings dedicated to the Church, and practised them for the love of God and the good of man.

The baroness's health, strength and spirits improved visibly.

On the third day a tenant called on Riviere, hemm'd and haw'd, and prepared to draw distant, but converging, lines of circumvallation round the subject of Rent.

Riviere cut the process short.

'I am a public man, and have no time to waste in verbiage. On that table is a seven years' lease, with blanks; you can sign it at forty per cent. increased rent, or at thirty per cent. by paying a bonus of one thousand francs.'

The man attempted to remonstrate. Riviere cut him dead short this time.

The farmer then lowered his voice. 'I have got a thousand francs in my pocket.'

'Oh! you prefer the thirty per cent. and the bonus. Very well.'

'That is not what I mean. You and I might do better than that. We will say nothing about a bonus; you shall clap on ten per cent. to show your zeal to the landlord, and *this*,' lowering his voice, 'will be for you, and no questions asked.' Riviere's first impulse was to hit him; the next was to laugh at him, which he accordingly did. 'My man,' said he, 'you must be very much in love with dishonesty. Now listen; if I report that little proposal of yours at Beaurepaire, you will never get a lease upon any terms.'

'But you won't! you won't!'

'Won't I? if you don't come to book in five minutes I will!'

'Give me ten, and I will see about it.'

'Humph! I don't see what you want with ten minutes—but take them.'

The farmer retired, and very soon after voices

were heard and heavy feet, and in came four farmers.

Riviere grinned. No. 1 had been secretly a deputation. The little band had been all under the window, waiting till the agent should have taken the bribe, and made them all right with Beaurepaire. But when No. 1 came down with his hair standing on end, to tell them that he had fallen in with a monster, a being unknown, fabulous, incredible, an agent that would not swindle his master, they succumbed as the bravest spirits must, even Macbeth, before the supernatural.

They came up stairs, and sorrowfully knuckled down; only No. 1 put in a hope that they were not to be treated worse than those who had not come to him at all.

'Certainly not.'

'Because two or three are gone to the chateau.'

'They shall gain nothing by that.'

'But *we* said why plague the baroness: she is old. She is at death's door. Lastly she has got an honest agent; let us go to him.' N. B.—They had all been at the chateau; but Jacintha had fooled the lot.

Riviere opened a door and beckoned. Out popped M. Picard's clerk, brisk, and smiling.

'You have got the writs in your pocket.'

'Seven of them, monsieur.' The farmers looked at each other.

'The moment we have settled these leases, run up to the chateau, and, if you catch any farmers prowling about, serve them—he! he! Now messieurs.'

A rustling of parchments—a crushing of pens to death on the table to see what they would stand on paper—a putting out of tongues to write well—a writing ill—a looking at the work after it was done—a wrenching out of bags of silver from the breeches pocket like molars from the jaws—a sighing—a making of bows—a clattering down the stair—a dying away of feet and voices—and nothing was left but the four money bags dispersed at intervals over the floor, and the statesman dancing a Saraband among them.

Wildish conduct. But sixty years ago when a man was a boy he was young. And besides the *gaillard* was not born in the isle of fogs.

Such relaxations are brief with busy men. In another five minutes he was off to the chateau. He went the shortest way across the park, and as he drew near the little gate, lo! the Pleasance was full of people. He was soon among them. Besides the doctor and the two young ladies there were three farmers and two farmers' wives. Failing in their attempts to see the baroness, and believing Jacintha's story that she never came down stairs, but employed herself on the second floor in pious offices and in departing this life, they had been

sore puzzled what to do: but catching a sight of the young ladies going out for a walk they had boldly rushed into the Pleasance and intercepted them, and told them the tale of their wrongs so glibly and with such heartiness and uniformity of opinion, and in tones so mellow and convincing, that both the ladies and the doctor inclined to their view. 'We will talk to Monsieur Riviere,' said Josephine kindly—'ah! here he is.'

'Yes, here I am. I thought I should find you here good people. Well have you piped your tune? are you overburdened with rent already? is your part of the estate cold and sour, and does it lie low &c. &c. &c. &c. &c. &c. eh?'

'Yes,' cried Laure, 'they have. La!'

'And it is too true monsieur.'

Chorus.—'Too true.'

'Jacques Pirot, last market day you broke a bottle of wine, I use your own phrase, with the man who bought your calves.'

'Well, monsieur, was that a sin?'

'When you had broken that, and spilled the wine into your gullet, you broke another.'

'And that is what brings you home from market the face red and the tongue stuttering,' cackled Pirot's wife, there present. 'Silence!' cried Edouard. 'When the wine is in, the truth comes out, even of a farmer. You bragged that Grapinet had offered you fifteen hundred francs to change farms with him, and that you had laughed in his face.'

'Do not believe it mademoiselle; it is not true.'

'I heard you. You too were there, Rennacon, drunk and truthful—two events that happen to you once a week—thanks to Bacchus, not to Rennacon. You boasted that Braconnier had offered to change with you and give you two thousand francs.' 'I lied! I lied!' cried Rennacon eagerly.

'Unjust to thyself! it was thy half hour for speaking the truth.' 'Now mademoiselle, deign to cast your eyes on these parchments. These are leases. Grapinet and Pepin and Braconnier have just signed; their rent is advanced thirty per cent.' General exclamation of the doctor and ladies. Looks of surprise and dismay from the others.

'For which favour—'

'He calls that a favour.'

'They have just paid me one thousand francs apiece. You, by your own showing, can pay me two thousand five hundred francs instead of a thousand. Now I will make a bargain with you. Sign similar leases here in three minutes, and I will let you off for one thousand francs each; hesitate, and I will have two thousand francs.'

'I will not sign at all, for one.'

'Nor I.'

'Nor I.'

Chorus of women—'We will sign away our lives sooner.'

'Jacintha—Jacintha!'

Jacintha appeared with suspicious celerity the

distance from the kitchen to the Pleasance considered.

'Fetch me a good pen and some ink.'

'But they say they will not sign,' said Laure.

'They will sign mademoiselle. Monsieur Chose, approach—serve the ejectments.' The clerk, who had just arrived, but stood aloof, drew out three slips of stamped paper, and made three steps forward. The effect was like a pistol presented at each head. The whole party set up their throats 'Wait a moment, for Heaven's sake! Mademoiselle, it is for you to speak. This is to usurp your place. Do not let them persecute honest men, who have paid their rent faithfully, they and their forbears to you and yours, in quiet times and troubled times, in good harvests and bad harvests.'

'Messieurs,' replied Josephine, 'M. Riviere, my good friend, has deigned to act as our agent. It would be little delicate on my part were I, after the trouble he has taken, to interfere with his proceedings. Settle then this affair with him, who appears to understand your sentiments, whereas my sister and I do not understand you.' And she withdrew quietly a little way like an angel gently evading moral pitch.

'Are you satisfied? is every door shut? here is Jacintha! In one word, will you sign or will you not sign?'

Jacintha, with characteristic promptitude, took Riviere's part, without knowing what it was about.

'Oh they will sign it fast enough,' she cried. 'Come to the scratch, my masters!' cried she cheerfully, and held out a pen. '*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* but where are we to find a thousand francs?' cried one.

'*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* in your left hand breeches pocket,' said Riviere laughing.

'I see it bulge,' screamed Jacintha.

Three hands went by a foolish impulse to three breeches pockets, to hide the swelling. It was too late.

'*Allons!*' laughed Jacintha like a merry trumpet, 'come forth five franc pieces!'

'It is a sorcerer then!' cried one of the women.

'No madam,' said Riviere, politely, 'it is only an observer. You left your dens armed at all points. The first game was to come here and throw dust in mademoiselle's eyes. Had you failed there the thousand francs was to bribe me to swindle my principals.'

'Decidedly he is a sorcerer! My good monsieur, say no more. We sign.'

'They sign,' said the doctor, 'it is incredible.' And he joined the ladies, who were walking slowly up and down the Pleasance, abstaining upon a principle of delicacy from interfering with Edouard, but, as may well be supposed, keenly though furtively attentive. When the farmers had signed, Riviere signed the duplicates. 'Are we not to have your name to it mademoiselle?'

asked a farmer. Josephine moved toward Riviere thinking he might require her.

'No!' he cried haughtily. '*I* have got her name on this authority, but my name is good enough for you. She shall not sign, and you shall not speak to her. You may look at her: that is no small thing. Good! you have looked at her. Now decamp rogues and jades.'

They went off muttering. They felt deeply wronged. Each a shade more so than the other. Rennacon vented the general sentiment of ill-usage thus—'Cursed be interlopers! Another year or two and I should have put aside enough to buy my farm: it will take me ten years at this rate.'

'Come Jacintha, hold your apron for the bags: lock them in one of your cupboards. Away with you.'

Then his friends all came round Edouard, and shook his hand warmly, and thanked him with glistening eyes again, and again, and again, Laure and all.

Now this young gentleman was so formed, that if one did not see his merit he swelled with bumptiousness like a peacock, but if one praised him too much, straightway he compared himself with his *beau ideal*, his model, say the Chevalier Bayard, and turned modest and shame-faced: so now he hung his head and stammered as they showered praise and admiration on him.

'No more words,' said Josephine, 'they make him blush. I must crown him. Run Laure, and bring me some bay leaves.'

'No! mesdemoiselles! no! there is more work to be done before I dare triumph. I must take your money down to the town, and pay that creditor off. Then my heart will be at ease about you all, and then I should like to wear a crown—for half an hour.'

'Come back to supper, Edouard, and wear it.'

'O! thank you.'

'There he goes without being measured, the giddy child. Take off your hat, monsieur.'

Then there was a mysterious gliding of soft palms and delicate fingers about his brow and head, and the latter was announced to be measured. And oh! reader, what botheration might be saved if every man was measured before a crown was clapped on him! He is for a hat.

'They can measure the outside,' said the doctor saucily; 'their art goes so far.' Edouard ran off. 'He quits us every minute,' said Laure to Josephine; 'that is why I detest him.'

'You don't detest him,' objected the doctor, as gravely as if he was announcing a fact in physics. 'That is why I like him then,' said saucebox.

Edouard ran to Jacintha for two out of the three money bags, took them home, converted the six thousand francs into bank paper (not assignats) and pelted down to the town.

He went at once to his notary to ask him what

forms were to be complied with in discharging the creditor. To this question, asked with eagerness and agitation, the notary answered with perfect coolness—

'The thing to do *now* is to take the money to the mayor. Perhaps you had better go to him at once: on your return I have something to say to you.'

Edouard ran to the Mairie; in front of it he found forty or fifty idlers collected, and gaping at a placard on the wall.

Edouard's eye followed theirs carelessly, and saw a sight that turned him cold, and took the pith out of his body.

A great staring notice, the paste behind which was scarce dry, glared him in the face.

'FOR SALE. THE LANDS OF BEAUREPAIRE, WITH THE CHATEAU AND OTHER THE BUILDINGS MESSUAGES AND TENEMENTS.

'AT THE REQUISITION OF JACQUES BONARD, CREDITOR. BY ORDER OF THE DIRECTORY,

'ARMAND, Mayor.'

This was the brightest afternoon Beaurepaire had seen for years. These young women whose lives had so few pleasures, denied themselves the luxury of telling their mother the family triumph. Unselfish and innocent they kept so sacred a pleasure from their friend. But though their words were guarded, their bird-like notes and bright glances were free, and chirped and beamed in tune with

their hearts. Their very breath was perfumed gaiety and hope. The baroness felt herself breathing a lighter, brighter, and more musical air. She said—'Are better days in store, my children? For to-day, I know not how or why, the cloud seems less heavy on us all.'

'So it does mamma, I smile at Josephine, and Josephine smiles at me, and neither of us have the least idea why—have we, my elder? and here is your coffee, dear, dear mamma.'

'Good! and what an aroma this has too, to-day, and a flavour? if this is from Arabia, what I have been drinking for months must have been a nearer neighbour, I think.'

'Let me taste, mamma,' said Laure. She tasted and was thunderstruck. She drew Josephine into the dark part of the room. 'Some one has been drugging my coffee—it tastes of Mocha—was it you, love?—traitress, I mean?—tell me dear.'

'No. Guess.'

'That is enough, the imp!! I'll—'

'I would,' replied Josephine. 'He said to me, "Mademoiselle Laure deceives her mother: let us deceive *her*." I told him I would betray him, and I have kept my word.'

'Yes, after cheating me: double traitress!! kiss me, quick! quick!!'

Supper was ready. No Edouard.

His crown of bay leaves was on the table: but no Edouard. They were beginning to fear he

would not come at all, when he arrived in haste, and sank into a chair, fatigued partly by a long day's work, partly by the emotions he had passed through. Through all this peeped an air of self-content.

'Forgive me, madam—it has been a long day.'

'Be seated, monsieur,' said the baroness ceremoniously. She was not best pleased at his making himself so at home. 'Or rather let us offer you something to restore you.'

'Nothing, madam, but a tumbler of wine with a little water—thank you. Mesdames, great events have occurred since I left you.'

'Oh, tell! tell!' Eyes, bright as sword blades in the sun with interest and curiosity were fastened on him, and their lovely proprietors held their breath to hear him.

He glanced round with secret satisfaction, paused, relished their curiosity, and then he told them how he rode down to the town, and went to his notary: and his notary had sent him to the Mairie, and there he had seen a placard offering the chateau and lands of Beaurepaire for sale.

'Oh! Heaven! oh Edouard!'

'Be calm—there, I meant to keep you a moment or two in suspense, but I have not the heart. I went into the Mairie: I saw the mayor: it was Bonard's doing, set on, of course, by Perrin: I paid your six thousand francs into the mayor's hands for Bonard. Here ladies, is the mayor's receipt; from that moment Beaurepaire was yours

again, and that accursed placard mine. I tore it down before all the crowd; they cheered me.'

'Heaven bless them!' cried the doctor.

'Dard was there in his donkey cart: he put his cap on his crutch, and waved it in the air, and cried—"Long live the Baroness and the Demoiselles de Beaurepaire:" and they all joined—aha! —well, as I made my way through the crowd, who should I run against but Perrin.'

'The wretch.'

'The pieces of the placard were in my hand: I hurled them with all my force into the animal's face.'

'Oh you good boy!'

'It was the act of a young man.'

'You are right, monsieur: I am almost sorry I did it.'

'Monsieur Edouard,' cried the baroness, rising, the tears in her eyes, 'I scarcely understand all you are doing, and have done for us: but you are a worthy young man: and I have not till now had the discernment to see all your value!'

'Oh, madam, do not speak to me so: it makes me ashamed: let me continue my story.'

'Yes! but first tell me, this six thousand francs —oh, how my heart beats! my children, how near ruin we have been—oh dear! oh dear!'

'Dear mamma, do not tremble: it is all our own, thanks to our guardian angel,' said Josephine. 'Edouard, I think our mother wishes to learn how we came to have so much money,'

'What, have you not told her?'

'No! Laure said you should have that pleasure: it was your right.'

'Ah! thank you, Mademoiselle Laure. Madam, the tenants paid you seven thousand francs to-day for leases at a rent raised thirty per cent. from this day.'

'Lowered, my child, you mean.'

'No thank you, raised.'

'Is it possible?—the good creatures!!'

'Eh? ah! humph! yes!'

'But is it really true? Can this be true?'

'Jacintha holds a thousand francs at your disposal, madam, and this receipt is your voucher for the other six thousand; and the leases signed are in the house.'

'And these are the people you had hard thoughts of, monsieur.'

'See how unjust I was!!!'

'Did they volunteer all this?'

'Not exactly. It was proposed to them, and within three days—'

'They fell into it?'

'They fell into it.'

'May Heaven reward them!'

'Humph!'

'As they deserve.'

'Amen! amen!'

'Such actions do the heart good as well as the house. I cannot but be affected by the sympathy of these humble people, who have known how to

show their good feeling, and may I venture to say their gratitude.'

'Call it by any fine name you please, madam; they will not contradict you.'

'Their gratitude, then, at a moment when it was so needed. After all, the world is not so ill. I seem to have gone back to the days of my youth, when such things were common. Ah! how happy I am! and how much I thank you for it, my young friend.' Riviere hung his head. 'May I continue my story?'

'Oh yes,' cried Laure, 'pray, go on. I guess you went next to the honest notary.'

'The what? ? ! !'

'The notary that is on our side.'

'I did, and what do you think his news was? That for two days past Perrin had been at him to lend him money upon Beaurepaire.'

'And he did not turn him out of the room?'

'No; he spoke him fair.'

'But I thought he was our friend.'

'He is our notary. Perhaps all the better champion for having no heart, and therefore no temper. He had been very civil to Perrin, had promised to try and get him the money, and so was keeping him from going elsewhere. Oh! this glacier gave me wiser advice than flesh and blood could have given. I am never five minutes with Picard, but I come away iced and wiser.'

Laure.—'And wickeder.'

Edouard (with sublime indifference).—'Clearly.

He said—"I have a hundred and twenty thousand francs: I will lend you them on Beaurepaire. Go to some other capitalist for a similar sum. The total will pay all the debts. Capitalists will not refuse you: for this rise in the rents plus the six thousand francs you have paid off alters the face of the security, and leaves a fair margin. Get the money while I amuse Perrin with false hopes." Here was a stroke of policy beyond poor little Edouard Riviere to have invented. Notary cut notary!! So to-morrow I ride to Commandant Raynal for a week's leave of absence, and the next day I ride to my uncle, and beg him to lend a hundred and twenty thousand francs on Beaurepaire. He can do it if he likes. Yet his estate is scarce half so large as yours, and not half so rich but he has never let anyone share it with him. "I'll have no go-between," says he, "to impoverish us both."'

'Both whom?'

'Self and soil—ha! ha! "The soil is always grateful,"—says my uncle—"makes you a return in exact proportion to what you bestow on it in the way of manure and labour—men don't." Says he, "the man that has got one hand in your pocket shakes the other fist in your face; the man that has got both hands in your pocket spits in your face." Asking excuse of you, madam, for quoting my uncle, who is honest and shrewd, but little polished. He is also a bit of a misanthrope, and has coloured me: this you must have observed.'

'But if he is a misanthrope, Monsieur Edouard, he will not sympathize with us—will he not despise us, who have so mismanaged Beaurepaire?'

'Permit me, Josephine,' said the doctor. 'Natural history steps in here, and teaches by me, its mouth-piece—ahem! A misanthrope hates all mankind, but is kind to everybody—generally too kind. A philanthrope loves the whole human race, but dislikes his wife, his mother, his brother, and his friends and acquaintances. Misanthrope is the potato—rough and repulsive outside, but good to the core. Philanthrope is a peach—his manner all velvet and bloom, and his words sweet juice, but his heart of hearts a stone. Let me read philanthrope's book, and fall into the hands of misanthrope.'

'He is right, ladies. My uncle will say plenty of biting words, which, by the by, will not hurt you, who will not hear them—only me. He will lash us and lend us the money, and Beaurepaire will be free: and I shall have had some little hand in it—hurrah!'

Then came a delicious hour to Edouard Riviere. Young and old poured out their glowing thanks and praises upon him till his cheeks burned like fire.

Josephine.—'And besides he raises our spirits so: does he not, my mother? Now, is not the house changed of late, doctor? I appeal to you.'

St. Aubin.—'I offer a frigid explanation. Among the feats of science is the infusion of

blood. I have seen it done. Boiling blood from the veins of the healthy and young is injected into old or languid vessels. The effect is magical. Well, Beaurepaire was old and languishing. Life's warm current entered it with Edouard; its languid pulses beat, and its system swells and throbs, and its heart is warm once more, and leaps with the blood of youth, and dances in the sunshine of hope: I also am young again, like all the rest. Madame the Baroness, *gavottons!*—you and I—tra la la la lah, tra la la la lah!'

Laure.—'Ha! ha! ha! Down with science, doctor.'

St. Aubin.—'What impiety! Some one will say, down with young ladies next.'

Laure.—'No! That would be punishing themselves. Hear my solution of the mystery. Injection of blood and infusion there is none. Monsieur is nothing more or less than a merry imp that has broken into paradise.'

Josephine.—'The fine paradise that it was before the imp came. No: it is that a man has come among a parcel of weak women, and put spirit into them.'

St. Aubin.—'Item into an old useless dreamer.'

Josephine.—'Fie! It was you who read him at sight. We babble and he remains uncrowned.'

Edouard.—'No! no! There are no more Kings in France!'

Josephine.—'Excuse me, there is the King of Hearts! And we are going to crown him. Come,

Laure. Mamma, since monsieur has become diffident, would it be very wrong of us to use force just a little ?'

'No, provided monsieur permits it,' said the baroness with some hesitation. Laughter like a chime of bells followed this speech, and to that sweet music Riviere, spite of his mock dissent, was crowned. And in that magic circlet the young Apollo's beauty shone out bright as a star. The green crown set off the rich chesnut hair, the shapely head, the rich glowing cheek, and the delicate white brow. Blushes mantled on his face, and triumph beamed in his ardent eyes. He adorned his crown in turn.

'Is it permitted to be so handsome as that?' inquired the baroness with astonishment. 'And to be as good as pretty ?' demanded Josephine.

Whilst he thus sat in well earned triumph, central pearl set round by loving eyes and happy faces that he had made shine, Jacintha came in and gave him a letter.

'Dard brought it up from the town,' said she.

Edouard, after asking permission, opened the letter, and the bright colour ebbed from his cheek.

'No ill news, I trust!' said the baroness kindly. 'No relation, no friend—' 'No, madam,' said the young man. 'Nothing serious; a temporary annoyance. Do not let it disturb your happiness for a moment.' And with these words he dismissed the subject, and was very gay and rather louder

than before. Soon after he took his leave. He went into the kitchen, and, after a few earnest words with Jacintha, went into the stable and gave his horse a feed.

The baroness retired to rest. In taking leave of them all, she kissed Laure with more than usual warmth, and putting her out at arm's length, examined her, then kissed her again.

'Stay doctor,' said Josephine, who was about to retire too. 'What is it? What can it be? Did you see what a struggle the poor boy went through the moment he read it; he took off his crown too, and sighed, oh so sadly, as he laid it down.'

'Mademoiselle,' said Jacintha softly at the door, 'may he come in?'

'Yes!—yes!' Edouard came sadly. 'Is she gone to bed happy?'

'Yes dear! thanks to you, and we will be firm. Keep nothing from us.' Edouard just gave her the letter, and leaned his head sorrowfully on his hand.

They all read it together. It was from Picard. Perrin, it seems, had already purchased one of the claims on Beaurepaire, value sixty thousand francs, and now demanded in his own name the sale of the property, upon the general order from the directory. The mayor had consented and the *affiche* was even now in the printer's hands. The letter continued—

'*It is to be regretted that you insulted Perrin, at this*

stage of the business. Had you consulted us on this point, we should have advised you not to take any steps of that sort until after the estate should be absolutely safe. We think he must have followed you to our place and so learned that you are our client in this matter, for he has sent a line to say he will not trouble us, but will get the money elsewhere.'

'That is what cuts me to the heart!'

'It is I who ruin you after all. Oh! how hard it is for a young man to be wise!' The girls came and sat beside Edouard, and, without speaking, glided each a kind hand into his. The doctor finished the letter.

'*But if you will send us down the new leases in a parcel, we shall perhaps be able to put a spoke in his wheel still; meantime, we advise you to lose no time in raising a hundred and twenty thousand francs. We renew our offer of a similar sum; but you must give us three days' notice.*'

'Good bye then.'

'Stay a little longer.'

'No! I am miserable till I repair my folly.'

'We will comfort you.'

'Nothing can comfort me, but repairing the ill I have done.'

'The ill you have done! But for you, all would have been over long ago!'

'Thank you for saying that—oh! thank you: will you see me off. I feel a little daunted—for the moment?'

'Poor boy, yes, we will see you off.'

They went down with him. He brought his horse round, and they walked together to the garden gate in silence.

As he put his foot in the stirrup, Josephine murmured: 'Do not vex yourself little heart. Sleep well to-night after all your fatigues, and come to us early in the morning.'

Edouard checked his horse, who wanted to start; and turning in the saddle cried out with surprise—'Why where do you think I am going?'

'Home to be sure.'

'Home? while Beaurepaire is in peril; sleep while Beaurepaire is in peril. What! don't you see I am going to my uncle, twenty leagues from here.'

'Yes but not now.'

'What? fling away half a day!—no not an hour, not a minute—the enemy is too keen, the stake is too great.'

'But think Ed—Monsieur Edouard,' said Laure, 'you are so tired.'

'I was. But I am not now.'

'But *mon Dieu!* you will kill yourself—one does not travel on horseback in the dark by night.'

'Mademoiselle, the night and the day are all one to a man when he can serve those he loves.' With the very words his impatient heel pricked the willing horse, who started forward, striking fire in the night from the stones with his iron

heels, that a moment after rang clear and sharp down the road. They listened to the sounds as they struck, and echoed along, and then rang fainter and fainter, and fainter, in the still night. When at last they could hear him no more, they went slowly and sadly back to the chateau. Laure was in tears.

CHAPTER IX.

THE French league in those days was longer than now; it was full three miles English. Edouard baited his horse twenty miles from Beaurepaire: he then rode the other forty miles judiciously, but without a halt.

He reached his uncle's at three in the morning: put his horse in the stable, and not to disturb the inmates, got in by the kitchen window, which he found left open as in the golden age: the kitchen fire was smouldering; he made it up, and dropped asleep on a chair as hard—as hard as a philanthropist's heart, doctor. He seemed to have been scarce a minute asleep, when a sound as of Red Indians screeching all around woke him with a start, and there stood his uncle's housekeeper, who screamed again at his jumping up, but died away into an uncertain quaver, and from that rose *crescendo* to a warm welcome.

'But saints defend us, how you frightened me!'

'You had your revenge.' I thought a legion of

fiends were yelling right into my ear. My uncle —is he up?'

'Your uncle! What don't you know?'

'No! how should I know? What is the matter? Oh! Heaven, he is dead!'

'Dead? No! Would he die like that, without settling his affairs? No, but he is gone.'

'Where?'

'We don't know. Took one shirt, a razor, and a comb, and off without a word—just like him.'

Edouard groaned.

'When did he go?'

'Yesterday, at noon.'

Edouard swore.

'Oh! don't vex yourself like that, Master Edouard.'

'But Marthe it is life and death. I shall go mad! I shall go mad!'

'No, don't ye—don't ye; bless you, he will come back before long.'

'So he will Marthe; he must be back to-day—he took but one shirt.'

'Hum!' said Marthe doubtfully, 'that does not follow. I have seen him wear a shirt a good deal more than a day.'

Edouard walked up and down the kitchen in great agitation. To spirits of his kind to be compelled to be passive and wait for others, unable to do anything for themselves, is their worst torture; it is fever plus paralysis.

The good woman soothed him and coaxed him.

'Have a cup of coffee. See—I have warmed it, and the milk and all.'

'Thank you my good Marthe. I have the appetite of a wolf.'

'And after that go to bed, and the moment your uncle comes I will wake you.'

'Ah! thank you good Marthe. Oh! yes; bed by all means. Better be asleep than twiddling one's thumbs awake.'

So Marthe got him to bed; and once there, Nature prevailed, and he slept twelve hours at a stretch.

Just at sunset he awoke, and took it for sunrise. He dressed himself hastily and came down. His uncle had not arrived. He did not know what on earth to do. He had a presentiment that while his hands were tied the enemy was working.

'And if not,' said he, 'why then chance is robbing me of the advantage zeal ought to be gaining me.'

'Wait till to-morrow,' said Marthe; 'if he does not come I shall have a letter.'

Edouard sat down and wrote a line to Doctor St. Aubin, telling him his ill-luck, and begging the doctor to send down the leases to Picard, as he had requested.

'Picard is wiser than I am,' said he.

The morning came—no letter. Then Edouard had another anxiety—he was away from his post.

Commandant Raynal was a Tartar. He had better ride over and ask for a week's leave of absence; and now was the time to do it. On his return perhaps his uncle would be at home.

'Yes! I'll saddle Mirabeau and ride over: then I shall not be twiddling my thumbs all day.'

Commandant Raynal lived about half way between his uncle's farm and Beaurepaire.

As Edouard came in sight of the house a dun pony was standing voluntarily by the door, and presently the notary issued forth, got into the saddle, and ambled towards Edouard. Edouard felt a chill at sight of him, but this was soon followed by a burning heat and a raging desire to go at him like the whirlwind, and ride both him and his beast of a pony into the dust.

He was obliged to keep saying to himself, 'wait a day or two, wait a day or two,' and did not trust himself to look at the man as they passed one another.

The other looked at him though, through his half-open lids, a glance of bitter malignity. Meeting his enemy so suddenly and at his commandant's house discomposed Edouard greatly, perplexed him greatly.

'Can these notaries divine one's very plans before they are formed,' said he to himself, 'can these practised villains?—no. He has come here simply to do me some general mischief: to set my com-

mandant against me: he has timed the attack well, now that I have a favour to ask him, and he such a disciplinarian.'

Edouard came before Raynal despondently, and after the usual greeting said—

'I have a favour to ask you commandant.'

'Speak!' rang out the commandant.

'A short leave of absence.'

'Humph!'

'On pressing affairs: oh, monsieur, do not refuse me!'

'Who tells you that I shall refuse you?' asked the commandant roughly.

'No one monsieur, but I have enemies: and I feared one of them might have lately maligned me behind my back.'

'Citizen Riviere,' replied the other sternly, 'if a man came to me to accuse any one of my officers behind his back, I should send for that officer and say to his accuser—"Now there is the man, look him in the face and say your say."'

'I was a fool,' cried the young man: 'my noble commandant—'

'Enough!' said the commandant rudely. 'Nobody has ever said a word against you in my hearing. It is true,' he added satirically, 'very few have ever mentioned you at all.'

'My name has not been mentioned to you to-day commandant?'

'No!—halt!' cried the exact soldier, 'except by

the servant who announced you. Read that despatch while I give an order outside.'

Edouard read the despatch and the blood rushed to his brow at one sentence in it:—'Edouard Riviere is active zealous and punctual. In six months more you can safely promote him.' This was all: but not a creature besides was praised at all.

The commandant returned.

'Oh commandant, what goodness!'

'Citizen, I rose from the ranks—how?—guess!'

'By valour, by chivalry, by Spart—'

'Gammon!—by minding my business: there is the riddle key: and that is why my eye is on those who mind their business—you are one: I have praised you for it—so now, how many days do you want to waste? Speak.'

'A few, a very few.'

'Are ye in love? That is enough—you are—more fool you. Is it to go after *her* you fall to the rear?'

'No indeed commandant.'

'Look me in the face! There are but two men in the world—the man who keeps his word, and the man who breaks it. The first is an honest man, the second is a liar, and waiting to be a thief: if it is to run after a girl take a week: anything else, a fortnight. No! no thanks! I have not time for chit chat. March.'

Edouard rode away in triumph.

'Long live the Commandant Raynal!' he shouted. 'He is not flesh and blood. He is metal: he rings loud and true. His words are not words, they are notes of some golden trumpet; and after being with him five minutes, one feels like beating all the notaries on earth.'

He reached his uncle's place.

'Not come home, Master Edouard.'

The cold fit fell on him.

The next morning came a letter from his uncle, dated Paris.

Edouard was ready to tear his hair.

'Gone to Paris with one shirt! Who could foresee a human creature going from any place but Bicetre to the capital of the world with one shirt! Order my horse, Marthe. He will turn it, I suppose, after the first week. That will be a compliment to the capital—ten thousand devils! I shall go mad. Order my horse.'

'Where are you going my young monsieur?'

'To Paris. Equip me; lend me a shirt. He has one left, has he not?'

Marthe did not even deign to notice this skit.

'But he is coming home!—he is coming home!' she cried; 'you don't read the letter.'

'True: he is coming home to-day or to-morrow Heaven above, how these old men talk! as if to-day and to-morrow were the same thing, or anything like the same thing. I shall ride to Paris.'

'Then you will miss him on the road.'

'Give me paper and ink, Marthe. I will write letters all day. Ah! how unlucky I am!'

He wrote a long letter to St. Aubin, telling him all he had done and suffered. He wrote also to the notary, conjuring him again to watch the interests of Beaurepaire keenly while he should be away. Then he got his horse and galloped round and round his uncle's paddock, and suffered the tortures that sluggish spirits never feel and cannot realize. The next afternoon—oh joy!—his uncle's burly form appeared, and gave him a hearty welcome.

The poor boy wanted to open his business at once, but he saw there was no chance of his being listened to, till a good score of farm questions had been put and answered.

In the evening he got his uncle to himself and told him his story, and begged his uncle to advance the two hundred and forty thousand francs on mortgage.

His uncle received the proposal coldly. 'I don't see my way to it Edouard,' said he. 'I must draw my money out of the public funds, and they are rising fast. No; I can't do it.'

Edouard implored his uncle not to look on it in that light, but as a benevolent action, that would be attended with less loss than actions of such merit usually are.

'But why should I lose a sou for those aristocrats?'

'If you knew them—but you do not, uncle:

do it for me!—for me whose heart is tied to them for ever!'

'Pheugh! Well look here Edouard, if you have really been fool enough to fall in love there, and have a mind to play Georges Dandin, I'll find you some money for the part; but I can't afford so much as this, and I wash my hands of your aristos.'

'Enough, uncle. I have not then a friend in the world but those whom you call aristos.'

'You are an ungrateful boy. It is I who have no friend: and I thought he came to see me out of love: old fool! it was for money, like all the rest.'

'You insult me, uncle. But you have the right. I do not answer. I go away.'

'Go to all the devils, nephew!'

Edouard was interrupted on his way to the stables by old Marthe.

'No my young monsieur, you do not leave us like that.'

'He insulted me Marthe.'

'Ah bah! he insults me three times a week, and I him for that matter: but we don't part any the more for that. He shall apologise. Above all, he shall lend your aristocrats the money. It won't ruin us.'

'Why Marthe, you must have listened.'

'*Parbleu!* and a good thing too. You keep quiet. You will see he has had his bark, and

there is not much bite in him poor man, though he thinks he is full of it.'

'Oh! my good Marthe I know his character, and that he is good at bottom, but to come here and wait, and wait, and lose days when every hour was gold, and then to be denied. *Mon Dieu!* where should I come for help but to my mother's brother? Alas! I have no other kindred.'

Marthe prevailed on him to stay.

This done, she went and attacked her master.

'Are you content?' asked she calmly, dusting a chair, or pretending to. 'He weeps.'

'Who weeps?'

'Our guest—our nephew—our pretty child.'

'All the worse for him. You don't know then—he insulted me.'

'To whom do you tell that? I was at the key-hole.'

'Ugh!'

'The boot is on the other leg; it is you who treated him cruelly. He weeps, and he is going away.'

'Going? Where?'

'Do I know? Where you bade him go!!!!!!'

'That gives me pain, that he should go like that.'

'I knew it would, our master, so I stopped him. sore against his will.'

'You did well; that will be worth a new gown to you. What did you say to him?'

'I said—"You must not take things to heart like that; our master is a vile temper—"'

'Ye lied!'

'"But he has a good heart."'

'You spoke the truth; I am too good.'

'"He is your mother's brother," said I, "and though he is a little wicked he does not hate you at bottom. Stay with us, and don't talk about money," said I, "that nettles him." For all that, master, I could not help thinking to myself, we are old, and we can't take our money away with us: our time will soon come when we must go away as bare as we came.'

'That is true, confound it!'

'As for my dirt of money, and I have rolled up a good bit in your service, for you know you were never stingy to *me*.'

'Because I never caught you robbing me, you old jade!'

'I shall let him have *that* any way.'

'If you dare to say such a word to him I'll wring your neck round; who are you to come with your three coins between my sister's son and me; be off and cook the dinner.'

'I go, our master.'

Uncle and nephew met at dinner: and nephew after his rebuff talked anything but money. After dinner, which Marthe took care should be much to his taste, the old man leaned back in his chair, and said with a good humour large as the ocean—

'Now nephew about this little affair of yours? Now is the time to come to a man for money; after dinner I feel like doing anything, however foolish, to make all the world happy before I die.'

Edouard finding him in this humour, told the story of Beaurepaire more fully, and laid bare his own feelings to an auditor who, partly from good humour, partly remorse, exhibited an almost ludicrous amount of sympathy, real or fictitious, with every sentiment, however delicate, Edouard exhibited to him.

He concluded by vowing they should have the money if the security was sound: 'and it must be,' said he, 'because the rents are raised, and you have paid off one of the mortgages. How long can you give me?'

'Oh! my dear uncle, we have a deadly enemy. Time is gold.'

'Let us see: to-morrow is market day, and the next day is the fair.'

Edouard sighed.

'The day after—we will see about it.'

Edouard groaned.

'I mean we will go down to the Mairie in my cabriolet.'

'Ah!'

'And the money in our pocket.'

'Ah! let me embrace you, uncle.'

Thus a term was put to Edouard's anxieties. In three days his uncle would be the sole creditor of

Beaurepaire. Still he could not help counting the hours, and he did not really feel safe till Thursday evening came, and his uncle showed him an apoplectic pocketbook, and ordered his Norman horse, a beast of singular power and bottom, to be fed early for the journey.

The youth was in a delicious reverie: the old man calmly smoking his pipe: when Marthe brought a letter in that the postman had just left. It was written in a lady's hand. His heart throbbed: Marthe watched him with a smile, and found an excuse for hanging about. He opened it —his eye went like lightning to the signature.

Laure Aglae Rose de Beaurepaire.

The sweet name was on its way to his eager lips, when he caught sight of a word or two above it that struck him like some icy dagger. He read and the colour left his very lips. He sat with the letter, and seemed a man turned into stone, all but his quivering lip, and the trembling hands that held that dear handwriting.

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